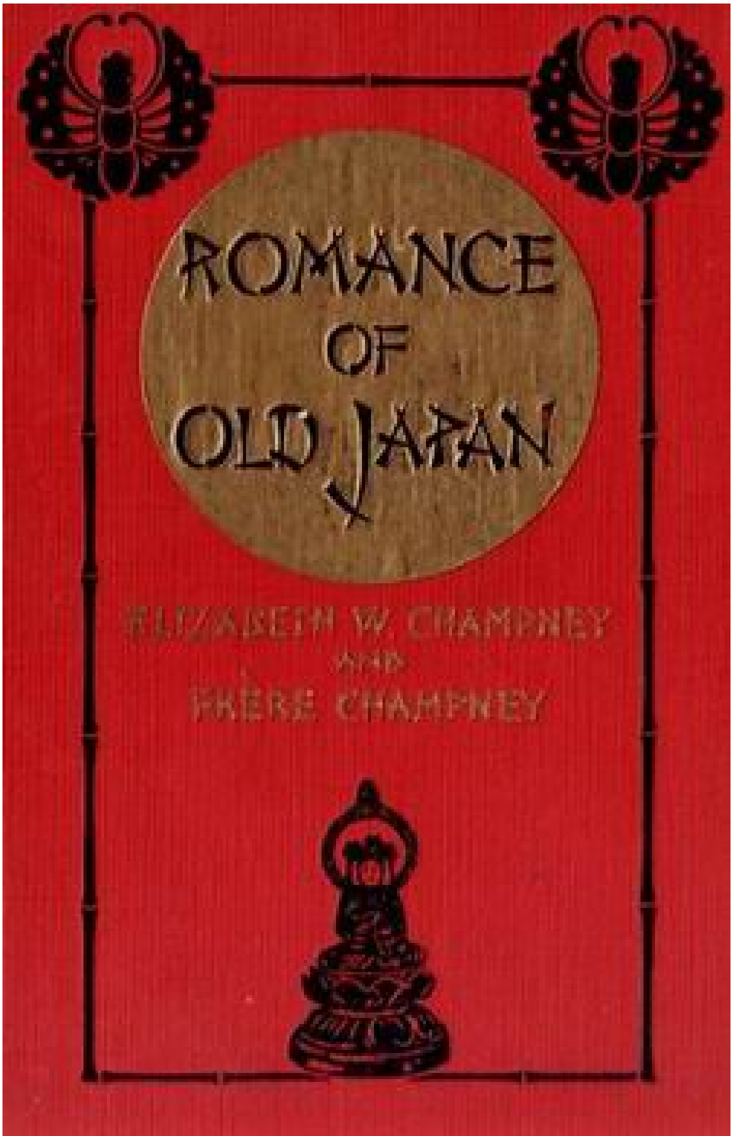
Romance of Old Japan

Elizabeth W. Champney
and Frère Champney

Illustrated by T. H. Robinson et al

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ROMANCE OF OLD JAPAN
ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY
AND
FRÈRE CHAMPNEY

ROMANCE OF OLD JAPAN

BY

ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY AND
FRÈRE CHAMPNEY

WITH 96 ILLUSTRATIONS

1917

by
ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY

Chapter XIV. and the verse, where not otherwise credited, are by Frère Champney.



KASUGA SHRINE, NARA
by Frère Champney.



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PREFACE

IN our sojourn in their fair islands, greeted everywhere with smiling courtesy and kindly welcome, we were struck by the likeness of this child-hearted folk to men of gentle mind the world over,

Brave, sensitive, and resourceful, achieving masterpieces of art which the world can scarce rival, they show the keenest appreciation of European knowledge and inventions, and a wondrous facility for their adaptation.

It is the aim of the authors to trace the floating bubbles of romance which reveal the deeper tide of history; to show how, despite utter isolation, Japan has kept pace through the ages with the march of nations.

Tradition tells of a mythology as rich in poetic imagery as Ancient Greece. Then dark ages lowered, until Shotoku Taishi, the King Arthur of Japan, brought enlightenment.

The high chivalry of Richard Cœur de Lion finds its counterpart in Yoshitsune, the hero dearest to Nippon's heart.

Ere Drake delivered England from Spanish invasion, Hojo repulsed the Invincible Armada of the Mongol Khan.

While Philip II. was burning heretics in the Netherlands, Ieyasu crucified the innocent disciples of Francis Xavier, and a Spartan code of honour wreaked the vengeance of the Ronins.

Art and learning flowered under the Tokugawa as in the golden days of the Renaissance.

The expedition of Perry opened the gate to world power, for which the triumphs of Port Arthur and Tsushima proved Japan's preparedness.

Their National Art displays a gradual development from the naïve sculpture of Shotoku, which recalls the groping of Pre-Raphaelites, to the realistic modernity of Hokusai.

Their Architecture reveals an evolution from the primitive simplicity of ancient Nara to the incredible magnificence of Nikko, where art emerges from its sombre chrysalis, "a flaunting butterfly, painted with the hues of dreams."

The spirit of their Poetry is so exquisitely elusive, the charm of the thought half-said so truly untranslatable, that any attempt to render literally its rare, fantastic grace must be foredoomed to failure. May we then be pardoned if, in the effort to suggest in English a hint of the original, we have permitted ourselves the liberty of an overfree translation

Nippon

Immortal land of chivalrous Japan,
What dynasties of "heaven-descended" came
Since Amaterasu, Sun-Goddess flame,
First flushed the snow of Fujiyama's fan,
And her great parents there created man!
While Buddha taught the life aloof from blame,
Monarch and minion fought for endless fame
And Minamoto crushed Taira's clan.

Then Hojo saved the realm from Kublai Khan,
And Xavier raised the Cross a little span,
The Tokugawa kindled Learning's light,
The Ronins died an ancient wrong to right
Ere Perry oped the door to Liberty
And Togo swept the Tartar from the sea

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CHAPTER I

THE TRAVAIL OF THE GODS

I

Ere the beginning of Time, Izanagi, the God of the Heavens,
High in the uttermost realms of the limitless chaos above,
Far in the vaporous vast of the infinite twilight of even,
Took unto wife Izanami, the beautiful Goddess of Love,

Out of her plenteous womb sprang the numberless worlds in commotion;
Sprang generations of gods, in unending miraculous birth,
Sprang generations of men and the beasts and the fish of the ocean,
Issued the fathomless sea and the mountainous reaches of earth.

She from the firmament first, to mankind in her mercy descending,
Water and knowledge of Fire and the wonderful vision of Light
Brought, and ordained every part of the life-giving earth never ending,
Then, in her death throe, gave birth to the Isles of the Dragon-fly bright.

KOJIKIDEN.

BEFORE the beginning of Time, ere yet were heavens or earth, sun or moon, or the multitudinous waters, all was gloomy chaos.

Out of this infinite void rose a cloud, floating upon the sea of silent space. In its hidden depths sprouted a bud, which shot like an iris-stalk into the air. As it rose it put forth leaves and blossomed, growing ever more pure and bright, till the wonder-flower mounted to Taka-ma-no-hara (the high plain of heaven), where it bloometh ever, the bright-shining Sun.

At the same time there fluttered downward from the heavenly firmament a night-blooming flower, which slowly unfolded its translucent petals and became the Moon.

Out of the hearts of these blossoms sprang a score of gods and goddesses, the last of whom were Izanagi (all-powerful-God-of-the-Air), and Izanami (Fair-Goddess-of-the-Clouds). From them issued all life: the eight hundred myriad deities of heaven, the countless generations of man, and the beasts and the birds and the trees.

Izanagi and Izanami stood upon the "Floating-Bridge of Heaven," a vast, aerial arch, which spanned the abyss between the realms celestial and the lower world. Izanagi spake to his heaven-born sister, saying:

"Needs must be that beneath us lies a kingdom. Let us descend and visit it."

Whereupon he plunged his sacred jewelled spear into thing caldron of the sea. When he had stirred it about, vainly groping for land, he withdrew the lance and from its point fell drops of liquid which became congealed into the island of Onogora. Stirring once more he heaped up a vast and lofty mountain, to the summit of which he attached the Floating Bridge, and thereupon the Earth-Makers descended.

When they alighted upon the island, Izanagi turned to the right and skirted the base of the "Pillar of Earth," while Izanami turned to the left.

When they met, the "Goddess of the Clouds" addressed her brother saying: "Who art thou, fair and lovely youth?"

Thereupon the heart of the "God of the Air" was wroth within him and he retorted, "I, that am a man, should have been the first to speak, whereas thou, a woman, didst address me. This is ill-omened. That our wedding may be auspicious let us begin anew."

Thus it came to pass that, as again the two deities, skirted the base of the "Pillar of Earth," Izanagi exclaimed at their meeting: "Who art thou, fair and lovely maiden?" and Izanami replied enraptured: "How delightful! I have met with a fair and lovely youth!"

Whereupon they clasped hands, and their marriage was accomplished.

Now when they had dwelt long time on the isle of Onogoro in love and happiness, to Izanagi and Izanami were born the eight islands of Japan. First the great Yamato (the Flowery Isle of the Dragon-fly), then Tsukushi (the White Sun Youth), Iyo (the Passing-fair Princess), Tsushima (the Stepping Stone), Ahaji (the Isle of Grieving), Shikoku (the Pearl of the Inland Sea), Oki (the Islet of the White Hare), and Lado (Gold Maid of the North).

Out of the foam of the billows were born numberless islets and from the clouds of the heaven they created Korea, Cathay, and the uttermost realms of the earth. Then were born the Kami: the Ruler of the Rivers, the Monarch of the Mountains, the Deity of the Trees, and the Deities which preside over the miracles of Nature.

Now the "God of the Heavens" looking upon his kingdom found it exceeding fair, and spake to the "Goddess of Love," saying: "All that now wanteth is a sovereign to rule over this great realm."

Whereupon were born to them a daughter, the Bright-Shining-Amaterasu, and a son, Susa-no-wo no mikoto.
Then Izanagi rejoiced greatly, saying: "Many are the generations I have begotten, but of all my multitudinous offspring the fairest are these."

Now Amaterasu was passing fair and outshone the very heavens. So Izanagi spake and said: "Child upon child have I fathered but none of them is like unto thee." Then, taking from his shoulders a necklace of precious stones, he gave it to Amaterasu, and leading her to the summit of the mountain and over the Rainbow Bridge, he commanded: "Rule thou henceforth over Takama no hara" (the High Plain of Heaven).

When Amaterasu mounted to her glittering throne in the sun the Spirits of Heaven rejoiced with exceeding joy, saying: "Forever shalt thou gladden the Eternal Land with the grace of thy celestial light.

Clouds shall be thy handmaidens and the Heaven-descending showers thy messengers of mercy to the earth."

Then Izanagi addressed Susa-no-wo, saying: "Rule thou over the Moon and the multitudinous salt water."

Unlike his ever smiling sister the Moon God was morose, turbulent, and sinister. When he waxed wroth, grass withered on the plains, flowers faded, and the Children of Earth perished.

Of her numberless progeny Izanami best loved her Earth Children, and most of all the lords of the Isles of the Dragon-fly. To these she gave eternal dominion over the fairest of lands, and bestowed upon them godlike powers: Wisdom, Valour and Craft, Justice, Mercy and Love. She commanded the Kami to minister to her Earth Children: the River God to water their rice fields, the Mountain God to delve for them his ruddy gold, the God of Trees to fell them timber for their habitations, and the Goddess of Abundance to heap their wains with overflowing fruit.

Whereat the immortal Gods were exceeding wroth and assembled in high council.

"Celestial Mother," thundered Susa-no-wo, "thou hast elevated thy Earth Children to the rank of Gods; so that even I must needs toil as their slave and harness my storm steeds to their sea chariots!"

Thereupon the divine council were moved with august jealousy and murmured to one another: "She loveth her Earth Children more than us, wherefore let her descend and abide with them!"

To this Izanami made appeal: "Shall my very offspring condemn me though I have done no evil!"

Then spake Ame-no-kami, the August Master Deity, saying: "Izanami, Goddess of Mortals, for that thou hast dragged thine immortal vesture in the mire of Earth shalt thou put off thine immortality and dwell a mortal in the abode of Death!"

Like to a thirsting flower withered the gentle Goddess, and withdrew to the solitudes of the mountains, where she bore a son, Kagu-tsuchi—the terrible God of Fire. In her birth throes she was mortally burned; but ere she perished Izanami bethought herself: "I have given birth to an evil-hearted child, a menace to the world of men."

So she bare yet another son, the God of Water, saying: "When the temper of thy brother waxeth violent do thou assuage it with thy cooling streams." Whereupon Izanami died and descended unto Yomi, the abode of departed spirits.

Izanagi grieved sorely for the loss of his beloved spouse, and resolved to seek her in the domain of the dead.

He descended thither through Ifuya-zaka (a hole in the centre of the earth), and came to the portal of Yomi, whence none may return. Here he perceived the spirit of Izanami waiting to meet him, and addressed her saying: "Beloved sister, come thou back I entreat thee, for the land that we created is not yet finished."

Whereupon Izanami answered: "Alas! thou comest too late. Look not thou upon me, for I have eaten of the bread of Yomi. I would fain return but it may not be!" Thus lamenting she retired within the portal of the underworld.

But the God of the Heavens heeded not the warning of the Goddess of Love, but pressed forward in swift pursuit. Through innumerable tortuous caverns dark and loathly with the odour of death he passed, following the scarce-seen wraith of his fleeing wife. On every hand flitted vague shadowy shapes, and phantom fingers groped after him through the gloom.

He cried to Izanami, and besought her to return, but she gave no response save a pitiful moan. He redoubled his efforts to overtake her and strove with all his might to grasp her fleeting form. After long elusion, in the cavern of Despair at the extremity of the

kingdom of Yomi he came upon Izanami writhing in her death agony.

Tenderly he strove to raise her but her spirit melted to mist in his grasp and vanished forever in the shadowy night.

Izanagi, pursued by the Furies of Remorse, ascended the Earth-stairway, and dwelt thenceforth upon the isle of Ahaji, in an abode of eternal gloom.

II
THE MIRACULOUS MIRROR

Amaterasu, the bright, the Sun Goddess, high in the heaven,
Giver of bountiful light and the manifold glories of day,
Sat at the loom of the night, with her beauteous hand-maidens seven
Weaving the dark web of Doom with its symbols of joy and dismay.

Speeding her shuttle of Fate, interwove Izanagi's fair daughter,
Lotus-pure blossoms of Love with the flame of a rapturous star;
Twining the green woof of Life with the scarlet-stained ribbon of Slaughter
Silver-bright Peace interweft with the red warp relentless of War.

Sudden from out of the void, by the wrath of the hurricane driven,
Into the Hall of the Gods, with the crash of a thunderbolt dire,
Down from the summit of Heaven, through a rent in the firmament riven,
Hurtled the Dragon of Hell, Susa-no-wo, demon of Fire!

Down from her throne in the sky fled Amaterasu aifrighted,
Down to the bounds of the sea to a cavern of shadowy night,
Where she immured her secure from the rage of her brother benighted,
Leaving to Stygian gloom the Isles of the Dragon-fly bright.

Sorely the people bewailed the loss of their Jewel of Heaven,
Vainly the people besought the return of their Sun-Goddess bright,
All unavailing their prayers, until Vulcan one auspicious even
Fashioned a mirror of gold that gleamed with miraculous light.

Then to the cavern they hied with Uzume, the Goddess of Laughter,
Who danced in the light of the moon on the marge of the frolicsome wave,
Rending the welkin with cries, till Amaterasu soon after,
Roused from her slumberous couch, peered forth from the door of her cave.

"Why this boisterous mirth, and what this unseemly commotion?"
Demanded the Goddess irate, and to her made Uzume reply:
"Queen of the Day, we rejoice in a princess more fair than the ocean,
Even more glorious-bright than the sun in the shimmering sky.

"Lo, now behold her," she spake, and Amaterasu, returning,
Looked on the mirror of gold and, perceiving her image therein,
Deemed that she saw there a rival, and straightway, with jealousy burning,
Ran from the door of the cave, in astonishment, wrath, and chagrin.

Scarce had she quitted the cave when suddenly unto the portal,
Taji-Karaô (the Strong) rolled a boulder of mountainous height,
Cutting her off from retreat, our sun-giving Goddess immortal,
Ever to smile on the land with the grace of her bountiful light.



"THEN TO THE CAVERN THEY HIED WITH UZUME, THE GODDESS OF LAUGHTER"
From "Shinto," by W. G. Aston.



“Amaterasu looked on the mirror of gold and perceiving her image therein, deemed that she saw there a rival“
From Old-World Japan by T H. Robinson

III

THE EIGHT-FORKED SERPENT OF KOSHI

One day Susa-no-wo discerned a chop-stick drifting down the River Hi, and, deeming that there must needs be folk dwelling in the country above, set forth questing what manner of men they might be.

When he had journeyed far into the forest fastnesses he came upon a grey-bearded man and an aged crone weeping, with a fair maiden set between them, whom they caressed as though bidding her a last farewell.

Susa-no-wo saluted them courteously, saying: "Who are ye, Gods or mortals? for ne'er before have I beheld Children of Earth in these lone mountains."

Thereupon the greybeard answered: "Thy humble servant, Great Augustness, is a deity of earth cleped Ashinadzuchi (Foot-stroke Elder), son of the Mountain-God. My wife is Tenadzuchi (Hand-stroke Elder), and this damsel is our daughter, Kushinada-hime (Wondrous-fair Princess).

"Why lament ye thus piteously?" asked Susa-no-wo, and the aged man answered:

"Alas, most honourable Lord, we bewail the loss of our eight beloved daughters, who, year after year, have been slain and devoured by the terrible eight-forked serpent of Koshi. Time is that the loathly monster cometh and this our last remaining daughter will surely perish. Wherefore do we grieve exceedingly."

"Tell me," entreated Susa-no-wo, "what manner of fish is this monster?"

"It hath eyes as red as a ripe mountain cherry, a noisome blood-inflamed body, armed with eight fearsome heads and eight forked

tails. Moreover its back is all overgrown with firs, cedars, and pines, and it trails its tortuous coils over eight valleys and as many mountains.“

Quoth Susa-no-wo: “Aged stranger, I will gladly slay the loathly dragon, if thou wilt but give to me this thy beauteous daughter in marriage.“

“With all reverence be it said,“ replied the father.

“I am ignorant of thine august name.“

“Thou beholdest in me,“ boasted Susa-no-wo, “none other than the brother of the glorious Sun Goddess Amaterasu, Heaven-descended ruler of Yamato.“

Whereupon the deities Ashinadzuchi and Tenadzuchi made no further ado, but assented joyously to his request.

Forthwith Susa-no-wo took the maiden from the arms of her honourable parents and transformed her into a many-toothed comb which he thrust into his dishevelled hair. He then bade the aged crone brew a great quantity of sake of eightfold strength, and fashioned a rampart of pointed logs wherein he hung eight goodly doors. At each portal he set a vast vat which he filled with the sake of eightfold strength. Then, with the utmost deliberation, he awaited the coming of the dread monster.

After a little the great serpent came lumbering its enormous carcase over hill and ravine until it reached the rampart of pointed logs. Here it paused at the portals and lapped up the liquor with its eight forked tongues. Whereupon it became unseemly drunken, laughing hilariously, slashing and cavorting its several tails like one bewitched, until, overcome little by little by a great drowsiness, it lay down to sleep.



“As she stooped over the well, of a sudden she saw the face of Prince Fire-Fade reflected therein“
From “Old World Japan“ by T. H. Robinson



"Whereupon it became unseemly drunken, laughing hilariously, slashing and cavorting its several tails"
(Hokusai)

Thereupon Susa-no-wo of a sudden drew his ten-span sword and slashed the monster into a thousand fragments. A river of blood gushed from each separate head, and as he severed the last remaining tail the edge of his august sword was notched. Marvelling greatly, he slit the tail of the serpent and discovered therein a miraculous sword, the divine Kushanagi (Herb-queller), which he delivered to the God of Heaven.

Then Susa-no-wo retransformed his many-toothed comb into the beauteous Kushinada-hime, whom he wedded forthwith in the province of Izumo, composing for that occasion the following verses:

Like high ramparts manifold
    Lo the clouds appear:
On all sides they firm enfold
    Kushinada dear,
Prisoned mine for e'er to hold
    In their ramparts manifold!
KOYOSHI.

IV

THE HEAVEN-DESCENDED

When began the earth and heaven,
By the margin of the River
Of the firmament eternal,
Met the Gods in high assembly,
Met the Gods and held high counsel,
Myriads upon myriads gathered;
Then to each high charge was given.
On the Goddess of the Sunlight,
Her who fills the sky with radiance,
They bestowed the realm of Heaven.
To her grandchild they delivered
This, the mountain-land Yamato,
This, the land of fairest rice-ears,
His with god-like sway to govern,
Long as heaven and earth endured.
HITOMARO (724—756).

From *Manyoshiu*
("Garner of a Myriad Leaves").

Translated by W. G. Aston.

Now the eight hundred myriad gods gathered in council in the bed of the Tranquil River of Heaven. And Amaterasu, the Bright-Shining Sun Goddess spake, saying:

"The Netherland of Rice Plains is rife with discord. By day the Earth Spirits swarm like flies in the fifth month, and by night they raise a clamour like the flames of fire. Wherefore must we send down a deity to quell these unseemly uprisings and restore the Sunny Land of Rice Plains to prosperity and peace."

Thereupon Amewaka (Heaven-Young-Prince) descended the Rainbow Bridge to govern the land. As he set foot on the shores of

the Isle of the Dragon-fly he encountered a beauteous earth spirit, the Princess Shita-teru-hime (Princess Nether-Shining).

Bewitched by her loveliness, Amewaka wedded the maiden forthwith and remained for eight long years feasting and revelling in the Land of Sunny Rice Plains.

The Sun Goddess, marvelling greatly at the long tarrying of her heaven-sent messenger, sent the faithful pheasant, Na-naki, to inquire the cause of his silence.

The pheasant flew down to earth and perched upon a many-branched cassia-tree which grew at the gate of the Prince's palace.

Then Ama-no-sagu (the Heaven-Spying Woman) went to the young Prince and said: "An evil bird percheth on the top of yonder cassia-tree. I fear its cry bodeth no good."

Forthwith Amewaka took his heavenly bow and arrows and shot the pheasant through the heart, so that it died. Upward and onward sped the feathered arrow through leagues of endless sky, till it pierced the highest clouds and fell at the very feet of Bright-Shining Amaterasu, seated upon her throne in the sun.

Then spake the Sun Goddess: "This is the very arrow I gave to Amewaka. Behold its feathers are stained with blood; perchance he hath been fighting with the Earthly Deities."

Thereupon she took up the arrow and flung it forth to earth, saying: "If this arrow be one shot by Amewaka at the Earth Spirits let it not attain to him; but if he hath an evil heart, may the heavenly arrow fly straight to that mark."

Now at this time the Heavenly Prince was sleeping after the feast of first fruits, and the feathered arrow pierced Amewaka to the heart.

When she beheld the dead body of her youthful husband Princess Nether-Shining wept long and bitterly. She would not be consoled and the sound of her cries rose to the High Plains of Heaven.

Whereupon Ame-no-kuno straightway knew that her son Amewaka was dead, and raised a mighty tempest which upbore the body of the young Prince to the Celestial Realms. Here they built a great mourning-house and wept and wailed for eight long days and nights with ceaseless lamentation.

Sang the mourners:

More lustrous than the precious gems,
Worn by Heaven's Weaving-Maidens bright,
More fair than their great diadems,
Was Amewaka, wondrous knight.
Alas, the glory of his face
No more shall shame the shining day.
Unblemished gem of loveliness,
Thy light is quenched now for aye![1]

[1]*From the Nihongi.*

At the same time to the obsequies of the pheasant Na-naki flew myriads of the swift-winged birds of heaven, in endless procession, the wild geese of the river, the storks, the kingfishers, and the eagles, who mourned their slain brother with a great wailing.

Thereafter the Sun Goddess summoned her grandchild Ninigi (Prince Rice Plenty), and thus exhorted him:

"Tis the appointed time when thou shouldst descend to rule in the Sunny Land of Rice Plains. Go thou, and may fortune attend thee, that thy dynasty, like the immortal Heaven, may endure for ever!"

Whereupon she conferred upon him three divine gifts: the Necklace of Jewels, which her father Izanagi had bestowed upon her at her birth, the Sacred Sword, which Susa-no-wo discovered

within the tail of the eight-forked serpent and the Miraculous Mirror whose lustre had lured her from the magic cave, commanding him the whiles:

“Guard jealously all these tokens, but the mirror with thy life, for when thou lookest therein thou shalt ever behold my countenance.“

When Ninigi was about to descend to the Land of Rice Plains, a herald, who had been despatched before to announce his coming, returned saying:

“There dwelleth a Giant God at the Eight Cross Roads of Heaven, whose stature exceedeth seven fathoms. A great light shineth from his mouth and his eyeballs glow like the sun at noonday.“

Now among all the eight hundred myriad deities of I leaven there was none who durst confront this prodigious giant. Wherefore Ninigi called to him Uzume, the Goddess of Mirth, and commanded: “Of all the heavenly goddesses thou art superior in the power of thy looks. Do thou go and make inquiry.“

So Uzume attired her shapely body in seductive raiment, bared her beauteous breasts, and hied to the Eight Cross-Roads of Heaven. Fearlessly she accosted the formidable monster and with a mocking laugh demanded:

“Who art thou that darest thus impede my progress? What meanest thou by this unseemly behaviour?“

The giant, mightily amused by the fearless mien of the playful Goddess, made answer:

“My name is Saruta-niko (Deity-of -the-Field-Paths). I respectfully beg to pay homage to the grandchild of Amaterasu and to attend upon him as his guide. Let his august highness descend upon the mountain of Takachihi. There I shall await him. Return to thy master, O wondrous-fair Uzume, and convey him this message.“

Thereupon the august grandchild quitted his Heavenly Rock-Seat, and, thrusting apart the eight-piled clouds of Heaven, clove his way with an awful way-cleaving and descended to earth!

From the Rainbow Bridge of Heaven, Ninigi stepped forth and alighted upon the peak of Takachihi in the isle Tsukushi, where, as had been agreed upon, the Deity-of-the-Field-Paths awaited him. When Ninigi had journeyed throughout his kingdom and had viewed the cloud-soaring mountains and endless primeval forests, the fertile valleys, and smiling sapphire lakes, he chose a fair hill overlooking the Inland Ocean, and

builded him a vast and lofty palace "whose pillars rested on the nethermost rock, and whose beams rose to the High Plain of Heaven."

So content was Ninigi with the faithful services of the Deity-of-the-Field-Paths that he bestowed upon him the beauteous Uzume in wedlock. Thereupon the terrible giant took the merry Goddess to his mountain fastnesses, where they dwell forever in joyance and mirth.

Thereafter Ninigi bethought himself of his own lonely and unromantic lot, when on a day as he walked upon the shore, he beheld a maiden of exceeding loveliness. Straightway he became greatly enamoured and accosting her forthwith demanded: "Who art thou, most beauteous Princess?"

To him modestly the maiden answered: "My name is Ko-no-hana (Princess Tree-Blossom), and I am the daughter of Oho-yama (Great-Mountain-Possessor)."

Hastily Ninigi betook himself to her father and implored the hand of the fair Princess.

But the monarch of the mountains had an elder daughter, Iha-naga-hime (Princess Long-as-the-Rocks), no ill-favoured dame of adamantine heart, unlike unto her sweet-souled sister. Oho-yama

desired that the offspring of Ninigi should, like the rocks, endure eternally and flourish as the blossoms of the trees. Wherefore he gave to Ninigi both of his daughters, clothing each in bright raiment and lading them with costly gifts.

But of Princess Long-as-the-Rocks, Ninigi would have nothing, bidding her return to her father.

Angered by his rejection the ugly daughter cried out in imprecation: "Hadst thou chosen me thy descendants would have lived for ever; henceforth shall they wither as the blossoms of the trees!"

Wherefore is the life of man brief as the bloom of the flowers.

Nathless Ninigi and the Princess Tree-Blossom dwelt long time together in peace and happiness, till on a woeful day a sudden cloud shrouded them in deepest gloom.

The ardent Summer Wind wooed Princess Tree-Blossom with importunate caresses; and, although he had no cause for jealousy, a madness fell upon Ninigi so that he disowned his sons.

His faithful wife, confident in her innocence, demanded the Ordeal by Fire. Retiring with her children into her dwelling she applied the torch and invoked thus their divine ancestress:

"Celestial Sun-Goddess, if these be the offspring of thy Heavenly grandchild suffer not the fire to harm them!"

Out of the very flames and into the arms of their father sprang the laughing boys. Thereupon Ninigi, perceiving the princess also untouched by the flames, knew how shamefully he had wronged her, and falling upon his knees besought her forgiveness protesting:

Like Mina‘s stream that foaming falls
From white Tsukuba‘s height,
My whelming love shall flow to thee
Strong as a torrent, pure and free,
Calm as a pool of night.[1]

[1] *Yogei.*

V

THE FORTUNATE FISH-HOOK

Once upon a time there dwelt upon the isle of Tsukushi a lad called Ho-wori (Prince Fire-Fade), the son of Ninigi, Heaven-descended grandchild of Amaterasu. This youthful prince was a famous hunter, who slew all manner of furry "things, both rough and soft of hair."

Ho-deri (Prince Fire-Flame), his older brother, was a famous fisher who caught all manner of finny "things, both broad of fin and narrow of fin."

One day Ho-deri, weary with waiting for the wind to abate and the sea to calm, thus challenged Ho-wori:

"Let us for the nonce exchange callings. Lend me, I pray thee, thy miraculous bow and arrows, that I may become a hunter. In return I will give thee my magic fish-hook."

So Ho-wori consented and did as Ho-deri bade him.

But the elder brother, skilled as he was in luring the denizens of the deep, was but a sorry huntsman. After an arduous day he returned weary and empty-handed. He accordingly gave back to Ho-wori his bow and arrows, saying:

"Thou hast the fortune of the mountain; and to me is given that of the sea. Restore thou my magic fishhook!"

Then Prince Fine-Fade answered: "In vain have I furrowed the jade-green water and cast my line beyond the bounds of the sea. No fish have I caught, and moreover I have lost thy worthless fish-hook."

Prince Fine-Flame flashed with indignation, and threateningly demanded his lost talisman. His brother generously offered to replace the missing fish-hook by a new one, but Ho-deri scornfully refused his proffered gift.

Ho-wori then took his sword, and, breaking it into a thousand pieces, forged from it a myriad fish-hooks, which he piled in a great heap and presented to Ho-deri. But even this did not appease Prince Fire-Flame, who retorted:

"These be not my magic fish-hook. Were they numberless as the beasts of the sea would I none of them!"

Now Prince Fire-Fade, grieving because of the resentment of his brother, went down one day to the jade-green sea. While he stood sighing and lamenting upon the shore, of a sudden appeared to him Shiko-tsutsu (the Old Man of the Sea).

"Why grievest thou thus, Ho-wori?" demanded the kind old man, and Prince Fire-Fade recounted to him the tale of the lost fish-hook.

Quoth the Salt-sea Elder: "Be of good cheer, Ho-wori; I will give thee aid." Plaiting together withes of bamboo, the old man fashioned a basket, wherein he set the young prince, who sailed in it far out to sea.

Now when he had passed the bounds of ocean, the basket burst its fragile seams and began to sink. Down it fell through endless depths of seaweed forests till it descended in the courtyard of a great castle, the abode of Wata-tsumi (God of the Ocean).

Before its gate stood a well, and above the well grew a wide-spreading cassia-tree. Ho-wori climbed into its tangled branches, and watched the myriad glittering fishes glide through its fantastic

foliage. As he gazed upon the brilliant scene, he perceived a maiden bearing a golden bowl approaching the well. It was the lovely Princess Toyo-tama (Peerless Jewel), daughter of the Sea-God.

Ho-wori stood spellbound by hen wondrous beauty.

As she stooped over the well, to draw water, of a sudden she saw the face of Prince Fine-Fade reflected therein. Whereupon she let fall her golden bowl and ran trembling to her father.

“Father," she cried, “I have beheld a youth with the countenance of a God within the branches of yonder cassia-tree."

Wata-tsumi, the Sea-God, went forth, and calling Ho-wori, cried:

“Descend, thou Son-of-the-Gods, and deign to accompany me to my unworthy dwelling."

Leading Ho-wori through his stately palace he seated him upon a throne cushioned eightfold with the skins of sea-lions. Before him, upon a table of coral, he set a sumptuous banquet, served on plates of pearl. They sipped rare ocean-sake from silvery shells, while fiddler crabs discoursed sweet music on the golden strand.

When they had feasted to their hearts' content, Ho-wori led the peerless Princess to the terrace, where in a shadowy garden of sea-blooms, he whispered his undying love, and Toyo-tama graciously consented to become his bride. They confided their joyous secret to the Sea-God who gave them his fatherly blessing, whereupon they plighted their troth anew and exchanged nuptial cups of the sweet ocean-sake.

Thereafter Prince Fire-Fade related to the Sea-God the tale of the lost fish-hook, and Wata-tsumi summoned before him all the fishes of his kingdom. Thousands upon thousands they came, fishes “broad of fin and narrow of fin," from the remote recesses of the mounts and valleys of the sea.

When they had all assembled in the Court-of-Sea-weed the Ocean-God questioned them, saying: "Know ye aught, my faithful subjects, of the magic fish-hook of Prince Fire-Flame?"

"We know naught," answered the Lobster, "except that the Red Woman (the Tai) bideth at home with a wounded mouth."

Wata-tsumi then despatched a fleet-finned swordfish to summon the Red Woman to their council. After a little the Tai came, and within her swollen gills was discovered the lost fish-hook!

For three long years Ho-wori dwelt happily with his Peerless Jewel Toyo-tama in the palace beneath the ocean. Then a great longing came upon him to return to his earthly home and to restore the lost fish-hook to his brother.

Toyo-tama, sorely troubled, told her father of her sorrow. But the Sea-God, by no means resenting the desire of his son-in-law, delivered unto him the fishhook, bidding him:

"When thou givest this to thy brother spit thrice thereon and hand it to him with averted face saying, ''Tis a hook of poverty, of ruin, and of downfall."

Moreover Wata-tsumi presented Ho-wori with two talismans wherewith to rule the tides of the sea, enjoining him:

"If thy brother be wroth bring forth the Jewel of the Flowing Tide, and the waters shall drown him. But if he craveth thy forgiveness do thou display the Jewel of the Ebbing Tide and the waters shall sudden recede and therewithal thou shalt save him."

As Ho-wori was about to depart Toyo-tama confided to him that she was soon to become a mother.

"Yet tarry not," she entreated, "but build for me a house upon the strand. On a day when the tempest rageth I will come to thee."

Prince Fire-Fade mounted a sea-dragon and node swiftly over the mountains and valleys of the sea to his own land.

When he found his brother he restored to him the lost fish-hook; and Prince Fire-Flame begged his forgiveness and promised eternal subjection.

On a day, "when the winds and waves were raging," Princess Peerless Jewel came gliding over the water throned upon a great tortoise.

On the strand Ho-wori had builded a cottage "thatched with cormorant feathers," and here, in due season, was she delivered of a beauteous son. When she had laid him in his joyous father's arms, Toyo-tama, transformed into a mermaid, disappeared for ever, in the depths of the jade-green sea.

Long and bitterly lamented Prince Fire-Fade:

> Gone is the Moon from out the summer sky,
> Spring's wonted flowers for me no longer bloom.
> All changeth; former light is present gloom,
> But still my changeless love lives on exhaustlessly.[1]

[1]*Narahira*

The boy grew apace, lithe and graceful as a sea-gull, blithe offspring of the sea and sky.

He longed to become a fearless sailor and skim the foamy billows in his speedy sampan, questing ever strange and unknown lands. Distant voices called to him from the deep. The winds whispered even of a fairy country overflowing with fruit and flowers. Nevertheless, he lingered in Kyushu, biding with his beloved father rather than leave him childless in his declining years. When Prince Fire-Fade's spirit was borne to the Eternal Land, whence none may return, his son committed his body to the waves.

Years after, feeling himself at death's door, he summoned to his bedside his son, Jimmu Tenno, and commanded him:

“Of old the beneficent Heavenly Deities conferred our Sunny Land of Rice Plains upon Ninigi, my divine ancestor. Now I learn that eastward lieth Yamato, a fair land girt by snow-crowned mountains, an isle of ease and plenty circled by the sapphire sea. Up therefore, journey thither, subdue its savage tribes, that thy descendants may dwell for ever in that fair country.“

Then the ever-bountiful Sun Goddess sent Yatagarasu the raven to guide him upon his way; and Jimmu, bearing with him the sacred regalia, necklace, sword, and mirror, sailed through the Sea of Myriad Isles to the flowery land of Yamato.

There he established his kingdom, which, thus the eternal gods have ordained, shall last from generation to generation so long as sun and moon endure!

CHAPTER II

THE LABOURS OF YAMATO

I

THE RESCUE OF THE PRINCESS

LONG, long ago in the old half-forgotten ages, when this world was in its tender infancy, there lived a lad named Yamato, the four times great-grandson of Amaterasu, Goddess of glorious light.

This Yamato was a youth of comely mien, great of stature, strong and fearless and skilful in the use of arms. It fortuned that on a day he fared forth from his palace to bathe in the breakers of Suminoye. Up through forests of giant cryptomeria, over hill and vale, through flooded moorlands verdant with the glow of the young rice ears, he journeyed till he came to the cliffs of the great surging sea.

Mounting a crag, and divesting himself of his raiment, he plunged deep into the heart of the swirling surf. Manfully he strove through the briny breakers which like great white chargers came galloping ever onward to the strand, now breasting their foamy summits with a stroke of his powerful arm, then whelmed in the emerald hollows with the ebb of the wave.

When he had disported himself like a playful porpoise to his heart‘s content, he laid him down upon the sunny strand. As he lay thus he fell a-dreaming, whereupon, through drifting mists of revery, there came to him the vision of a mermaid beauteous as the Night with raven tresses and eyes of larkspur blue, who glided suddenly from a cavern in the cliff hard by.

Yamato rubbed his sleep-laden eyes, and halloing lustily, plunged into the surges and swam swiftly after her. But the siren, aff righted, with a quick flip of her lustrous-scaled tail sank beneath the water

and vanished from view; and though Yamato searched diligently for the entrance to her cavern no trace of it could he find.

Oft thereafter the youth wandered to Suminoye questing the siren. For hours he would lie prone upon the rocks vainly searching the darkling water for the glitter of her lithe body; but the lovely Nereid came nevermore.

Many tides flowed and ebbed upon the beach of Suminoye, and the long-deferred day for the wedding of Yamato with the Princess Tacibana had at last come.

He was returning from her father's palace with his betrothed bride. As he rode beside her litter, his band of warriors trailing behind them through the dusky forest, he passed a great and lofty castle seated upon a beetling crag. It was walled about with palisades and defended moreover by rocky bulwarks overhanging a wide and turbid stream.

Here lurked a band of mounted brigands armed to the teeth, commanded by a bandit notorious for his crimes through all Izumo.

Scarcely had Yamato and his bride appeared than the brigands galloped over the drawbridge and with pike and gisarme fell upon them. Whereupon the litter-. bearers fled incontinently, leaving Yamato to confront the bandits single-handed.

As flash the lightning bolts about Fujiyama so fell the sword of Yamato upon the heads of the unhappy miscreants. A score of the foremost brigands fell before his terrible lunges; the remaining cravens were fleeing for their lives, when the chieftain sprang suddenly upon Yamato with a thunderous mace-stroke felling him instantly to the ground.

Then all was dark. Far away, like the murmur of distant surges, Yamato heard the shrieks of his betrothed as the bandit bore her to his castle.

With might and main he vainly strove to raise himself, but his steed lay across his body, and black waves of death surged over his soul.

Some while later he recovered consciousness, in the temple of Ise, whither his warriors had borne him in the litter of the Princess. Here the chief priestess salved his wounds with a wondrous healing balsam, so that he speedily revived, no whit the worse for his encounter, and clamoured lustily for steed and men.

Nevertheless the high priestess stayed him with wise and timely counsel. "This castle," quoth she, "is so stoutly defended that none may take it either by siege or assault. Its lord is the infamous outlaw Takeru. He hath assembled thither a host of desperate and vicious men who carry off maidens from their homes and hold them in durance vile."

Yamato flashed with rage: "Gird on my sword," he cried, "and bid my warriors make ready!"

Whereupon the priestess protested: "Nay, take the sacred sword of Susa-no-wo, but hide it neath thy garments, for these be the weapons whereby thou shalt conquer."

Then she brought forth a woman's broidered robe, and, tiring his hair like a dancing maiden's, decked it with a gleaming tiara, and hung about his shoulders the sacred necklace of the Sun Goddess.

Yamato, seeing himself thus transformed into a maiden of surpassing beauty, doubted not that in this guise he would compass the ruin of his foes.

Bidding his warriors follow at a little space, he journeyed alone to the outlaw's castle.

When he reached the gate the sentry, little deeming that this beauteous damsel was a sturdy warrior, with an evil smile permitted him to pass.

Yamato traversed an interminable gallery leading to a lofty chamber where in solitary grandeur the notorious bandit sat at meal. Sodden with sake, he leered drunkenly upon Yamato, as, with a graceful obeisance, the seeming dancing-maid addressed him: “Permit, honourable Lord, that I pour thee a cup of sake.“

Perceiving his queenly visitor, the bandit let fall the pheasant which he was devouring and gaped upon her in astonishment.

“How earnest thou hither, my sweet hussy?“ he thundered.

“The warriors of Yamato pursued me, gracious Lord, and I seek thy honourable protection in this thy castle.“

“Of a surety,“ exclaimed the delighted bandit, “thou shalt find all thou seekest. Come sit thou beside me, for none other shall pour my wine so long as I do live.“

“That were too great honour,“ answered Yamato, the whiles he said within himself: “Thou speakest more truly than thou knowest, for when I have done with thee thou shalt drink no more.“

Whereupon Yamato poured sake for the bandit, simulating the mincing steps of a dancing-maid and casting upon him sly alluring glances.

Takeru became more and more enamoured of his fair servitor, and, inflamed by his potations, clasped the pretended maid in his arms.

Yamato wrestled with such unforeseen might that Takeru, perceiving his supposed sweetheart to be no fragile maiden, but a steel-sinewed warrior, howled with affright, and releasing his grasp, stealthily whipped forth a knife.

Yamato, nothing daunted, sprang beneath his uplifted arm, and grasping the wrist of Takeru bent it backward until the bones snapped.

Letting fall the dirk Takeru groaned:

“Verily thou hast conquered; but tell me, I beseech thee, by whose hand I die, for myself have I ever held to be the most valiant of men.“

“I am called by the name of my country,“ cried Yamato, as he dealt the avenging death-stroke.

“Henceforth,“ gasped the bandit, “be thou known as Yamato-take (Stout-hearted-Yamato), for there be none like thee in all the land!“ Thus speaking the bandit gave up his evil soul.

Like flame borne by the whirlwind, Yamato swept through the castle questing the imprisoned Princess.

“Tacibana!“ he cried from deepest dungeon to the topmost tower, “Tacibana, thou art free!“

At last he heard a faint wail, like the cry of a wounded bird, and, bursting in the massive gate of a treasure-chamber, discovered the unconscious Princess lying prone upon the pavement, her hands bound behind her back. In her agony of apprehension she had loosed from her headdress a jewelled dagger which she held between her teeth, ready to fall thereon at the coming of Takeru.

Yamato severed her bonds with a swift sword-stroke, crying, “Tacibana, it is I.“

Then raising his hunting horn to his lips he sounded the signal for the onset.

Thereupon, after a turbulent encounter in the castle-court, his doughty warriors overwhelmed with sore disaster the astonished bandits, who, learning that their chieftain had perished, soon lost heart and gave themselves up, yielding subjection to this unknown avenging amazon.

Placing his joyous Princess before him upon the bandit's charger, and followed by a goodly cavalcade freighted with rich loot from the castle treasuries, Yamato rode in triumph to his palace at Kashiwabara.[1]

[1]Old Nara

In the evening, mid great rejoicing, were the wedding cups of sake exchanged; and though Yamato bestowed many precious gifts upon his lovesome bride, none gladdened her heart more than the gaily embroidered robe, garbed in which he had delivered her from the bandit Takeru.

II

THE GROT OF LOVE

When 'neath the drowsy hill the Day doth fade,
    And Eve with ebon wing doth earth enfold,
Then come to me and in my grot abide;
    There will I cloak thee from winter cold
Within warm-nestling arms, with thine enlaced.
    Pillowed upon my breast more bright than gold,
Clasping the silken girdle of my waist,
    Thou 'lt lie beneath a coverlet of flowers,
    And sleep and dream away the idle hours.
Then, if my passion thou wouldst deign to prove,
Come dwell with me within my grot of love.

KOJIKI.

Now it came to pass that, though his Princess was ever an obedient and gentle wife, the fickle Yamato soon wearied of her constant devotion. Since there was no more fighting to be done in her behalf, Tacibana seemed to him tedious and of little worth. Wherefore sought he distraction in the zest of the chase, riding far afield in quest of stag and boar and neglecting his dutiful Princess, who grieved sorely but uttered no word of plaint.

Yamato longed for his lost siren, the mysterious mermaid. One day he wandered on the isle of Enoshima, led thither by strains of elfin music, floating from the realms of air. On and on he followed the haunting melody, seeming now to issue from the very bowels of the earth.

Descending the jutting cliff to the ever-seething waters he beheld a great grotto from whose hidden depths glowed a wondrous emerald light. While he pondered upon this, he heard again the eerie music and saw a flitting of faint shadows as of strange celestial damsels.

Plunging through the surges, Yamato swam to the mouth of the cave. Here he paused as though he would fain draw back, for often had he heard old wives' tales how this grotto was a trap baited with unearthly bliss, whence no mortal might e'er return. Then he heard the heart-enthralling strains anew, and a voice wondrous sweet calling his very name, and he struck out manfully for the cavern.

His foot fell upon a seeming rock, which yielded suddenly beneath his weight and a monstrous dragon, snorting terribly, lumbered forth into the sea. Nothing daunted Yamato entered the grotto, and, ever following the strange emerald light through long and tortuous galleries, came at last to a vast and lofty chamber.

Here burst upon his enraptured vision

> So fair a scene,
> That mortal eye might ween
> It scann'd the very heavens' unknown delight.
> For ne'er in those old vasty halls imperial
> Bath'd in the moonbeams bright,
> Or where the dragon soars on clouds ethereal,
> Was aught like this to entrance the sight:
> With golden sand and silvern pebbles white
> Was strewn the floor;
> And at the corners four,

Through gates inlaid
With diamonds and jade,
Pass'd throngs whose vestments were of radiant light.[1]

[1]From a "NO Drama" translated by Dr. B. H. Chamberlain.

Upon a couch of coral bowered mid glittering sea-blooms, reclined his lost siren, singing softly the whiles she gently fingered a gold and amber lute.

"Mortal, behold Benten, Goddess of Deathless Love," sang the mermaid. "Deign, most worshipful stranger, to taste the pleasures of our watery realm."

Even as she spake her beauteous handmaidens spread before the delighted youth a banquet of rare and delicious dishes, such as he had never known. Sweet ambrosial sake they poured into cups of frail-stemmed sea-lilies. Heaps of gem-like fruits gleamed on plates of opalescent anemones. Translucent shells of pearl shed throughout the chamber a soft silvery light, and entrancing strains pulsated from unseen recesses, breathing of peace and love.

Yamato, kneeling spellbound at the throne of the Goddess, implored: "Grant me thy love, sweet siren — else I shall surely die."

With eyes abased Benten fingered idly her gold and amber lute. Strangely sweet the songs she sang, but sweeter still the caresses she lavished upon the infatuated youth.

Suddenly she cast him from her: "To win my love thou must dare death," she demanded imperiously.

"There is naught I would not venture, gentle Goddess," he declared fervidly, "for the sake of life with thee."

Benten smiled incredulously. "Sail to Horaizan," she commanded. "Gain the Golden Apple of Immortal Youth; and thereafter shalt thou dwell with me in unending love."

"I pray thee tell me of this land," besought Yamato. "List," cried the siren; the whiles strumming her golden lute she sang:

THE QUEST OF THE GOLDEN APPLE

In the long-forgotten ages of the heroes and the sages,
    Far across the Yellow Ocean in the kingdom of Cathay,
Once there dwelt a cruel creature, mean of soul and cold of feature,
    Whom all worshipped as an idol, bowing neath his despot sway.

Now Jofuku, court physician, sore lamented his position,
    Ever fearing lest the morrow were his last remaining day,
So the leech one lovely morning to his master giveth warning
    And salaams his august kingship and these words to him doth say:

"Grant me but a junk, good Master, wherein I without disaster
    To the 'Isle of Life Eternal,' far beyond the sun, may sail;
Then will I the Apple Golden for thee pluck, whereby thine olden
    Limbs shall leap with youth immortal, ever beautiful and hale."

So the King, in jubilation, made but little altercation;
    And Jofuku journeyed southward o'er the smiling, sapphire sea.
Days and months and years together sailed he on through wind and weather,
    Till above the far horizon he beheld a Wonder-Tree!

Floating on the idle billow like a head upon a pillow,
    Fast asleep upon the ocean dreaming midst the foam-flowers white,
Loomed the Tree of Youth Immortal, of eternal life the portal,
    Growing out the misty marges of an Island of Delight.

Quoth Jofuku: "Yon fair island is no other isle than my land,
    Here shall I abide for ever eating of this Wonder-Tree!"
So forthwith the junk he stranded and upon the shore he landed,
    In a Forest of Enchantment floating on the sapphire sea.

And for five-score years he dwelt there, nor the flight of time he felt, where
    Birth and Death and Age exist not lightly sped the 'trancèd hours,
In a round of endless pleasure, rife with joyance beyond measure,

Lived Jofuku in this paradise of ever-blooming flowers.

Till one day he longed to sally o'er the ocean's foam-flowered valley
As he wistful watched the sea-fowl winging southward through the sky;
Then he hailed a storklet slender and in accents sweet and tender
Pleaded: "Pray kind bird transport me to my home ere yet I die!"

And the stork forthwith consented and the leech, with joy demented,
Mounted on its snowy pinions, swiftly soared across the foam,
Bearing thence the Apple Golden safe within his arms enfolden,
To his native land returning, never more again to roam.

For the tyrant's life had ended and Jofuku now ascended,
Khan of Khans, enthroned for ever o'er the kingdom of Cathay,
Far across the Yellow Ocean, worshipped with a blind devotion,
Wields he o'er a myriad Tartars still the sceptre to this day.



" Mounted on its snowy pinions swiftly soared across the foam"
From "Old-World Japan" by T. H. Robinson

"Days and months and years together
sailed he on through wind and weather."



“Till above the far horizon he beheld a Wonder-Tree!
From “Old-World Japan“ by T. H. Robinson

ENVOY

"Prince! if thou wouldst be my lover, that Enchanted Isle discover,
Bring me back the Golden Apple, thy devotion thus to prove!
Then in joyance beyond measure, in a round of ceaseless pleasure,
Thou shalt dwell with me for ever in eternal youth and love."

III

THE DEMON BOAR

Returning to Kashiwa-bara, Yamato demanded of all his courtiers concerning the Island of Golden Apples, but none had heard thereof.

Thereupon he wandered to the ports and harbours, questioning ever the sailors and fishermen, nor had any of these bold seafarers beheld the wondrous land.

A lethargy of despair fell upon him. He delighted no longer in the sports of the field, neither in feasting with his boon companions nor in biding at home with his fair and lovesome wife.

Right joyously did Tacibana greet him after his long absence, though ofttimes the tears welled to her eyes as she beheld him gazing wistfully upon the sea.

"Why do you weep?" he asked impatiently; and sweetly she answered: "For happiness, good my Lord.

> "Like rain upon a parching flower Thy
> presence is to me;
> But grieving lone for many an hour
> I withered without thee."
>
> (FUJIWARA NO MOTOSHI.)

On a day came certain of the country folk to Yamato plaining:

"Know, great Prince, that in the forest of Hakone rageth a giant boar. None is there who dareth oppose him, for he is possessed of a demon, even by Susa-no-wo, who rideth upon him brandishing spear and sword scattering fiery arrows and carrying murrain an pestilence throughout the land."

Then cried Yamato: "I will forthwith to Ise an take counsel how I may vanquish this demon boar!"

Right gladly the high priestess welcomed Yamato. "Eagerly have I awaited thy coming," she exclaimed. "Fain would I tender thee the Sacred Sword, for with no other weapon can this boar be slain. In his tail alone is the monster vulnerable and he runneth more swiftly than the wind."

Greatly marvelling, Yamato took the sword. "How then, save in sleep, may I overtake him?" he pondered. "Yet would I not slay him defenceless. Such easy conquest delighteth not my heart."

With a band of hardy huntsmen Yamato set fort to a forest at the foot of Fujiyama.

Startling to air myriads of winged creatures, out-running swift-footed hares in tempestuous flight, coursing hither and thither with nose to earth, the pack pursued the scent, lustily giving tongue while the merry cavalcade galloped furiously upon their heels.

Ever higher through dusky forest glades they climbed to the bright-shining uplands. A scent of thyme floated on the breeze; velvet heather lay like a carpet beneath their feet. Towering like mighty castles one above the other, peak overtopping peak in never ending flight, mighty mountains loomed their time-scarred battlements against the cloudless sky.

Up steep ravines and beetling cliffs they mounted to a jagged crag, where, backed against a writhen cedar, beset about by the clamorous hounds, roaring in wrath at this invasion of his secret lair, stood at bay the giant demon boar.

Valiantly the pack drove upon him, only to be tossed instantly in air and to fall, tusked through the entrails, in pools of gore. Whereat the bowmen let fly a cloud of arrows, but their shafts rebounded like hail from the boar's invulnerable hide.

"A giant boar possessed of a demon, Susa-no-wo,"



Who rideth upon him brandishing spear and sword scattering fiery arrows and carrying murrain and pestilence throughout the land" (Hokusai)



"Yamato bestrode the Boar and grasping the tail severed it from the spine."

(Hokusai)

Then Yamato, heedless of the warning of the high priestess, set his spear in rest and urged his stallion to the charge. An instant later the steed impaled itself upon the terrible tusks and Yamato toppled headlong to the ground.

Staggering dazedly to his feet he strove to raise his steed, but the noble creature quivered in its death agony, gazing helplessly upon its master with mute, appealing eyes.

Of a sudden, bristling with baffled wrath, snorting furiously, and gnashing his murderous tusks, the monster charged.

Hoping to spear him as he passed, Yamato sprang behind the trunk of a tree. But the boar had halted, and with cruel cunning bided his time.

Thereupon our hero found himself in sorry straits. On the one hand yawned a black abyss, on the other stood a threatening monster. To leap into the chasm or to dare the demon were alike certain death. But Yamato, undaunted, drew the Sacred Sword, and with an agile bound springing clean over the boar's head, he bestrode the astonished creature and, grasping his tail, severed it suddenly from the spine.

Blind with pain the demon plunged over the precipice, and was dashed into a thousand fragments upon the rocks below; while Yamato, sliding dexterously from its back, remained in safety upon the brink.

IV

THE GRASS-CLEAVING SWORD

Then came Yamato and his valiant warriors to the pine-clad shore of Suruga. Having pacified the unsubmissive savages of the mountains and rivers, they journeyed until they came to the wide-spreading plains of Sagami.

Here the chieftains welcomed Yamato with feigned hospitality, inviting his warriors to a deer-hunt upon the moor.

Little deeming the treachery in store for them, they sit forth eagerly on the chase. All day long they stalked the stag through the wide-

spreading moorlands, and at eve bivouacked upon the dry and grassy plain.

“At the hour when rivers are most clamorous,“ Yamato was awakened by a strange, unwonted sound, —a crackling as of goblin laughter and a swishing as of ghostly shrouds.

“Surely,“ he said within himself, rubbing his smarting eyelids, “tis but a dream, an evil-boding dream.“

But the crackling swiftly increased, till it became a mighty roar. An unwonted light glowed in the heavens and the stars were shrouded by a cloud of lurid smoke writhing ever upward like a serpent of living fire.

Springing to his feet, Yamato saw that the entire moor (before him, on either hand, and behind) was a sea of leaping flames! Shouting to his comrades, he strove vainly to discern an opening in the impenetrable barrier of fire.

Meantime another and greater peril fell upon them. Thousands of deer, terror-stricken before the approaching flames, rushed frantically to and fro, trampling and goring horses and huntsmen in blind insensate flight.

Wrenching themselves free of their tethers, the frightened horses galloped screaming through the camp. In mad stampede they coursed round and round, within the ever-narrowing wall of flames, surging onward with their long streaming manes, like foaming billows breaking over rocks.

Thereupon, rather than to meet death beneath those cruel hoofs, Yamato bade his archers shoot down the maddened steeds.

But the fire waxed more and more furious, hemming them within an ever-narrowing circle, till all hope died within the hearts of the prisoned men.

Of a sudden amid the fiery smoke wreaths, Yamato beheld a spectre which wavered upon the sea of flames. Ever nearer it came till he perceived a maiden in fiery garments running through the burning grass. As she ran she tore off her flaming vestments, till, her long hair singed, her fair body pitifully scorched, Tacibana fell trembling at his feet.

She uttered no cry of pain, but joyously bespake him:

"Behold this fire-drill, O Beloved! By its aid thou mayst find safety."

Then Yamato mowed down a circle of grass with the Sacred Sword, and, taking the drill, kindled backfire; thus making an isle of safety in the ocean of flame. Whereupon the wind, turned the fire upon the treacherous savages, consuming them utterly.

Thus did my hero and his warriors make good their escape, by virtue of the "Sacred Grass-Cleaving Sword," yet, methinks, more justly by the brave devotion of the Princess Tacibana.

V

THE SACRED SWORD

Benten

'Neath jutting cliffs, upon relentless sands
Where thund'rous surges ever seethe and boil,
And writhen trees, sprung from the barren soil,
Outstretch to heaven gaunt, supplicating hands,
There hides a grotto on the island strands
With winding chambers, worn by ocean's toil,
Lighted by taper-flare of fragrant oil,
In whose umbrageous depths an idol stands.

Bestride a dragon belching fiery breath
In wreathed incense on the humid air,
Benten immortal, shrined mid wind and rain,

Goddess of Love, lurks in her loathly lair,
Lady of sorrow and eternal pain,
Sleek serpent-goddess with the kiss of death.

Riding homeward Yamato and his Princess took their way along the shore, the fateful isle of Enoshima glimmering dimly through distant mists.

Again rang the siren's song in the ears of Yamato and his former madness fell over him.

"Ride home," he commanded Tacibana; "hide thy visage until thy flame-singed tresses have grown anew, and thy scorched skin hath regained its satin lustre, for verily thou art hideous in my sight."

A teardrop glistened in the eyes of the devoted Princess, as she meekly did her husband's bidding, singing to her sad heart the whiles a song of Hope, on this wise:

If 'tis for long this love will last
I neither know nor care.
One morn I'll hold him tangled fast,
Within my lustrous hair.[1]

[1]*After Lady Horikawa*.

Yamato plunged through the foam-flowered surges and swam to the emerald grotto of Benten.

Treading upon the threshold, his foot sank in the folds of a noisome dragon; but he slashed it with the Sacred Sword, and, bellowing with pain, the monster glided away.

Hearing the uproar Benten cried in alarm:

"Vain, presumptuous youth, anger not my faithful guardian, else will he slay thee!"

“Nay,” replied Yamato, sheathing the blade, “this is the Sacred Sword, against which neither beast nor man, nor e‘en the immortal gods may prevail.”

Then was the siren glad, for the dragon who guarded her cave was none other than her father, the evil gods Susa-no-wo, who having striven in vain to possess himself of the sword by force, had bidden his daughter lure it from Yamato through guile and treachery.

When Yamato lamented that he had not gained the Golden Apple the siren reproached him but lightly; and summoning her beauteous handmaidens, spread before him a sumptuous banquet, mingling in his sake a sleep-compelling potion, the whiles she discoursed drowsy lullabies upon her golden lute.

Heavily slumbered Yamato, but awaking ere dawn, he groped for the form of Benten and discerning her not, called:

“Where art thou, Beloved?” But none gave answer.

Then a peal of mocking laughter rang out, and, springing from his couch, Yamato perceived by the silvery morning twilight that he was indeed alone. Though he searched through every cranny of the cavern he found not the siren, when suddenly, to his great dismay, he realized that the Sacred Sword had also disappeared.

Swiftly swam he to the shore and distraught wandered for hours through the forest bewailing his folly and the treachery of woman.

While treading through the crimson leaves
Far up the mountainside,
I hear the stag‘s faint plaintive call
Upon the autumn tide,
Sad as the wind-blown leaves that fall
Swift scattered far and wide.

SAMNARU.

Fain would he have returned to his faithful Princess but in the labyrinthine forest he lost the trail. The white cone of Fujiyama loomed ghostlike through the distant mists, and thither, weary and sorrowful, he bent his lonely way, beseeching Kwannon, the Merciful, to aid him in his sore distress.

The Vision of Yamato

Then to his mazèd eyes appeared a star,
Shaming the summer moon's ethereal light.
Above the crest of Fujiyama, far,
Shimmered a vision Paradisal bright!

Gleaming mid fleecy cloud, a damsel fair,
Robed in vague vestments of translucent white,
Showering bright blossoms on the azure air,
Hovered upon the ebon sea of Night!

Yamato fell upon his knees and prayed,
Scarce drawing breath, so utter his dismay.
Beseemed she was no merely mortal maid,
This queen celestial gleaming like the day.

"O Goddess," thus he spake, "whoe'er thou art,
Throned in the highest heaven o'er gods and men,
Strengthen mine arm, embolden thou mine heart,
That I may gain the Sacred Sword again."

Then him the angel answered: "Lo
Yamato-take, heaven-descended lord,
Fear not, nor rend thine heart with utter woe,
Deliverance I bring. The Sacred Sword
Thou soon shalt find hard by a mountain mere,
Upon the antlers of a Magic Deer!
Haste then the stag to slay, ere it shall bear
The precious blade to Susano for e'er."

Thus spake the Goddess; then upon the night,

Mid dulcet strains of lute and psaltery,
Like fleeting dew before morn's radiant light,
Melted to mist and vanished utterly!
KOYOSHI.

Then Yamato knew that the damsel he beheld in the vision was none other than the celestial Kwannon, Goddess of Mercy and Love, and obedient to her command scoured moor and mountain in quest of the magic stag.

"Had I but my trusty javelin," he spake within himself; "but naked-handed and weaponless how may I slay the demon deer? Nathless will I strive mine utmost."

Of a sudden before his amazed eyes there shot up from the earth a mighty bamboo-stalk, tall and slender but exceeding strong. Yamato clove the shaft and, binding therein a pointed flint, fashioned a goodly lance.

Scarce had he finished when there sounded across the forest a far-off trumpet-peal, the belling of a mighty stag!

"O for my hounds!" cried Yamato, despairingly. "Gentle Kwannon, dost thou mock my helplessness? Would that I had the scent of a dog, whereby to track this stag, or four fleet legs wherewith to match its flight."

Yamato cast himself upon the earth in despair, and, lying thus, he discerned, approaching ever nearer through the silent forest, a faint pattering as of softly padded feet.

Sudden there darted across the moonlit glade a gaunt shadow, like that of a great, shaggy dog. It leaped lightly over his body, then was lost in the wild-wood.

"Gleaming mid fleecy cloud, a damsel fair"



"Robed in vague vestments of translucent white
Hovered upon the ebon sea of night"
(Sozu Eshin)



"But still the cruel fisher shook his head"
"Dance first and I thy wings will straight restore"
From "Old-World Japan," by T. H. Robinson

Yamato wondered: "Can it be that some other huntsman is on the scent of the stag?"

Another and another shadow slipped stealthily by.

Crouching behind a tree Yamato gave them free way, as in serried ranks, a pack of famished wolves trotted by, the slaver dripping

from their long, lolling tongues. After them bounded Yamato, crying: "Kwannon hath lent me her hounds."

Through marsh and wilderness, out of the ferny forest, up lava-encrusted slopes, he climbed to a point of vantage, whence all the countryside could be discerned.

Beneath him in a meadow, on the marge of a placid lake, browsed a great white deer; and behold! as in the palace of a daimio his precious blade lies on the carven rack, thus amid its wide-spreading antlers rested the Sacred Sword!

Suddenly the stag sniffed the air, stamped the earth, and bellowing lustily, bounded toward the lake. Little by little the wolves gained upon him and their leader, springing at his throat, was instantly transfixed by his ten-forked antlers.

Into the waters leaped the Magic Stag, and the pack, balked of their longed-for prey, slunk, crestfallen and silent, back into the forest.

Above the glittering wake Yamato discerned the Sacred Sword, still resting upon the antlers and, hurling his lance, plunged into the lake.

Swimming with might and main he gradually gained upon the struggling stag, when the reddening tide told him that his spear had gone straight to the mark.

Seizing the Sword, Yamato plunged it clean to the hilt in the heart of the Stag.

Bellowing lustily, down through unfathomable depths sank the dying demon, and Yamato, the Sacred Sword between his teeth, swam joyously to shore.

VI

THE DRAGON

Exulting in his victory Yamato descended the forest-clad slopes of Fujiyama.

Joyous at having regained the Sacred Sword, his heart leaped with a greater happiness. At last he realized that not for love of him but to gain the Sacred Sword had Benten woven her guileful web; and his heart yearned for the faithful Tacibana. But first, he told himself, he must visit the sorceress to charge her with treachery and theft.

He hastened to their trysting place, and, gazing into the jade-green water, presently perceived the glitter of her golden scales.

Yamato plunged headlong in pursuit of the fleeing siren and the dark wave closed above him.

As a stone cast into a bottomless well sank Yamato, and ever, as he descended, the sea crooned in his ears a sweet yet sorrowful slumber-song bodeful of love and death. Then was he mindful of returning earthward, but of a sudden he felt himself enveloped by the folds of a loathly serpent, and a chill struck to his very heart.

The song of the sea became louder and more articulate till he recognized the voice of Benten:

“I hold thee for ever,“ sang the siren. “Thrice have I held thee, and thrice hast thou eluded my grasp. Henceforth none may wrest thee from me, save a goddess whom thou shalt acclaim more beautiful, whose love is even greater than mine own.“

Then dim and far, above the endless leagues of jade-green water, Yamato was ware of the Princess Tacibana gently murmuring his name. Through the infinite depths he beheld her lovesome face smiling to him from out the dusky cloud-rifts of her hair.

Then knew Yamato that "the goddess more beautiful than Benten whose love was greater than her own," was none other than his faithful Tacibana.

Downward, like the tendrils of some miraculous vine, grew the dusky tresses of Tacibana. They enveloped Yamato in a fragrant cloud and enlaced him in the meshes of a silken net. Like strong encircling arms they upbore him, through endless leagues of water, to the sea-swept isle of Enoshima.

Tacibana, pitiful and wan, gazed anxiously upon him. Her warm white hands clasped his in fond solicitude.

He strove to speak, but a great weariness overcame him and he fell upon the breast of his faithful Princess.

When Yamato came to himself Tacibana had vanished, whither he knew not.

"She hath gone for help and will presently come again," he said within himself; but hours passed and she did not return.

Distraught by vague forebodings Yamato turned his steps toward Kashiwa-bara.

He found the city in a state of utter panic. Their household chattels piled upon bullock-carts, or borne upon their bended backs, the terror-stricken natives were rushing hither and thither as though surprised by a sudden conflagration.

Demanding the cause of their alarm Yamato was informed that a terrific dragon had descended upon the land, slaying cattle, devastating rice-fields, and overwhelming the people with pestilence and death.

When last descried the monster was entering the royal palace, whence lamentable cries had issued telling the fate of its inhabitants.

Yamato hastened thither. All was silent and deserted. From cellar to turret he rushed, calling frantically upon Tacibana, only to find a mass of mangled and lifeless bodies. He searched gardens and outbuildings, following trails of blood, but nowhere could he discern trace of his lost Princess.

Of a sudden he heard a sound as of a priestess chanting, and mounting a Pagoda found Tacibana clad in white vestments waving a wand, and chanting the *norito*.[1]

[1]*An ancient exorcism to protect the faithful from serpents, sprites, and goblins.*

Suddenly her voice was whelmed in a terrific uproar. The Thunder God Raiden beat furiously upon his drums; great leaden clouds shut out the sky. Futen, the Wind God, unloosed his tempests; while with a flash of forked lightning, from a rent in the midnight sky, hurtled Susa-no-wo, Dragon of the Sea.

His head was like a camel, his horns were like a stag, and his eyes were glowing coals of fire. Scaled like a crocodile, he brandished a tiger's paws, armed with the talons of an eagle.

Belching forth the steam of a score of geysers and rearing itself upon its terrible tail, the dragon charged at Yamato.

Dexterously evading the onslaught, he thrust, lunged, and slashed, burying his blade in the dragon's belly, but in vain, at every stroke he was enwrapped more closely in the great constricting coils.

Thus the battle raged, the reptile answering each stroke with an ever-tightening grip, until it seemed that the hero's strength would fail.

But Yamato, gathering himself in one supreme effort, thrust his sword to the hilt in the dragon's throat.

With lightning-like convolutions the monster strove to wrest the blade from the hand of his antagonist, then with a thunderous

battering of wings soared in air. Writhing in its death-throes it hovered a moment, then fell crashing to earth.

Yamato heard afar the voice of Tacibana chanting:

"Henceforth shall all evil and calamity through writhing reptiles for ever disappear, as the wind of morning blows away night's chill-enfolding mist. As ships sailing from the harbour so shall these evil spirits be borne to the Sea Plain, then swept through the Whirlpool Gate to Yomi, that the earth be rid of them for ever."

Yamato lifted his weary lids to behold the wondrous smile of Tacibana.

"My divine Lord," she murmured, "thou hast delivered me for ever from Susa-no-wo."

"Henceforth, my Beloved," replied Yamato, "naught may part us. No longer shall our arch-enemy defile

the land. Hereafter hath he power alone over the sea."

Full long and joyously lived Yamato with his ever-loving wife.

One day, in the month of the watery moon, he fared forth upon a foray against the tempestuous Amos.

Loth to hazard the toilsome mountain passes, he chose rather to embark his army upon the sea.

Princess Tacibana, in sore distress that her lord was in no mind to renounce this venture, implored to be permitted to accompany him.

Laughing away her fears, Yamato consented:

"'Tis my last fight," he declared. "Henceforth will we spend our days in never-ending peace."

When they had journeyed to the wave-washed shores of Idzu, Yamato exclaimed exultingly:

“Why should I fear to encounter Susa-no-wo upon the sea, since I have already conquered him on land?“

Whereupon the Sea God, angered at the defiant words of Yamato, raised a mighty tempest. The rains descended and the winds blew and beat upon the ship. Thunderbolts crashed about them and lightning blinded their eyes. Great billows swept the decks, sails were rent in ribbons, and masts were split in twain.

Out of the depths he heard a siren singing:

“Reckless Yamato, thou hast adventured upon my ever-verdant Sea Plain and defied my father, the God of Ocean. Therefore shalt thou perish, else another victim be granted me.“

In the seething emerald waters Tacibana beheld a mermaid stretching out moon-blanched arms.

Forgetting his former infidelity she resolved to sacrifice herself in the place of her beloved lord.

“Take me, Benten, to thy watery kingdom, “cried the Princess, then plunged into the foam-flowered waves.

Of a sudden the tempest abated, the sea was calmed, and a snow-white heron soared upward to the sun.

“With thee let me live or perish!“ cried Yamato, leaping into the jade-green sea.

Long he battled beneath the wave, groping through the depths for his faithful Princess. At last he rose bearing in his arms a white and lifeless burden. The snow-white spirit of Tacibana had soared to the Eternal Land.

"Alas, my beloved wife!" sobbed Yamato, "may the foam-flowers bloom for ever on thy grave!" [1]

[1] *From the lament of Yamato, the eastern province of Japan is still known as Azuma, "Alas! My beloved wife."*

The Autumn flames with ruddy, golden light
  The verdant leaves, ere sere and dead they flee,
But ever pure and fair, like blossoms white,
  The foam-flowers bloom upon the deathless sea.

YASUHIDE.

BEREAVEMENT

Her face displayed the flush of autumn day,
Lissome her form as stem of frail bamboo,
Unfathomable her eyes as ocean blue.
For her we hoped a life as long and gay
And flowery-full as the sweet month of May,
Not evanescent like the morning dew,
Or eve's light veil that vanisheth anew
With morrow's wind, blown whither none may say.

If we, who glimpsed but momently her charm,
So moved are, how must he be forlorn
Who pillowed once his head on her white arm,
Now desolate indeed as lone he lies,
Sundered so swiftly from her loving eyes,
Like fleeting mists of eve and dew of morn!

HITAMARO.

CHAPTER III

MYTHS OF THE FLOWERY ISLES

I
THE FAERY ROBE

'Tis dawn on lone Suruga's pine-clad land
    And, save the lap of wavelets on the strand,
All silence is, and, redolent of spring,
    The pendant branches 'neath the zephyrs sway,
And cloud of fragrant bloom endues the day
    With weft of snowy flakes on filmy wing.

(A lone fisherman speaks:)

"But hark! methought I heard a far-off roar
    Of rushing waters, midst the wailing pine.
Ethereal strains of melodies divine
    Float to mine ear along the foam-fringed shore.

"But nay! no tempest frets the slumbrous seas,
    Nor mars the cradle-song the waters sing.
'Tis but the gentle voice of Mother Spring
    That softly croons within the vibrant trees."

Then from the crest of Fujiyama grand,
    Fluttered to earth a cloudlet fleecy-fair,
Hovered a moment o'er the pine-clad strand,
    Then melted in the silent azure air.

'Tired in a stainless robe of feathers white,
    A fairy stood beside the smiling sea,
Touching a dulcimer with fingers light,
    The while she chanted most enchantingly.

Then laughingly laid down her idle lute,
    Hung her bright robe upon a branch of pine,
And, while the fisher gazed with wonder mute,
    Plunged like a mermaid in the silvery brine.

The fisher spied the robe upon the tree,
    Light as the plumes of some celestial dove.
"A garment of the gods!" he laughed in glee,
    "Twill bring me fortune, happiness and love."

Then from the ocean swift the fairy came
    And thus the fisher-lad she did implore:
"Pray, give me back my robe of winged flame,
    Or ne'er again may I to cloudland soar."

Whereat the crafty fisher made reply:
    "Nay, that I will not, else, before you fly,
You trip for me upon the grassy ground
    The dance that makes the very Moon go round."

"First give me back my robe, and I will tread
    That mystic measure of the days of yore."
But still the cruel fisher shook his head,
    "Dance first and I thy wings will straight restore."

"Fie on thee, evil man!" exclaimed the fay,
    "To doubt the promise of a heavenly sprite.
I cannot dance reft of my plumage bright.
    Dear Fisher, give it back to me I pray!"

Then, moved by pity, love, and sudden shame,
    The fisher plucked the plumage from the tree,
And gave unto the maid her robe of flame —
    "Now take thy pinions, Fairy, and be free!"

And now the fairy dons her rainbow wings;
    Touching again her lute with fingers light,
A merry madrigal she blithely sings
    And trips a measure frolicsome and bright.

The fair celestial dance that moved to mirth
    The myriad gods by sweet Uzume's wile,
And lured their glorious goddess back to earth,
    Fore'er to greet us with her wondrous smile.

The fisher gazed with love-entranced eyes,
    Ravished with untold wonder and delight.
Beseemed a blossom born of Paradise
    Was this frail fay, too fair for mortal sight.

Waving her rainbow raiment to the breeze,
    She skims the surface of the slumbrous seas,
Then flutters from the mazèd fisher's sight
    Into the realms of air, with laughter light.

On pinions swift she circles, swoops, and veers,
    Cloud-soaring to the sun, till suddenly,
O'er Fujiyama's crest, she disappears,
    Whence erst she came into the azure sky.

Again on lone Suruga's pine-clad land
    All silence is, upon the slumbrous seas,
Save lap of wavelets on the silver strand
    And moan of voices in the vibrant trees.

(Ancient "NO Drama.")



"Emperor Chiuai reclined in his summer pavilion, gazing over the jade-green sea"

(Hokusai)



Benten, the Dragon‘s Daughter

(Hokusai)

II

THE JEWEL OF HEART'S DESIRE

I. The Land of Morning Calm

Emperor Chiuai reclined in his summer pavilion, gazing over the jade-green sea.

His slender fingers drew from a silver lute strains of heart-rending melody. In all the world he knew but two delights, the art of music and his high-hearted bride.

The Empress was an adept in manly sports, a fearless Amazon, a hardy huntress, and the clash of arms was as music in her ears.

Roundly she rated her spiritless spouse:

"Art thou indeed the son of valiant Yamato?" she scoffed contemptuously.

"Verily," rejoined the Emperor placidly, "for that my father hath subdued the country there remaineth for me naught but my queen, my kingdom, and my lute."

The brow of the Empress clouded:

"Unworthy son of a glorious sire, I would have thee bear the sword of Yamato beyond the sea. In a dream the Sun Goddess came to me, saying: 'Westward lieth the Land of Morning Calm wherein is hidden the Crystal of Heart's Desire; that jewel I now bestow upon thee."

Put, not thy trust in dreams," admonished the Emperor pointing toward the sea. "Look! Seest thou aught save the great water? Even those who ascend the mountain-tops discern no more. Think not to

wield the sword, but content thyself with the distaff and needle. There is no land beyond the Western Sea!"

Of a sudden a blinding light flooded the chamber and, with a rustling of wings, Amaterasu descended, terrible in her anger.

Faithless craven!" she flashed, "for that thou doubtest my celestial prophecy thy Queen shall subdue this land, and thou shalt die!"

The Emperor went white; his eyeballs rolled in their sockets.

"My Heavenly Sovereign," besought the Empress, "in pity look upon thy wife!"

Lifting his trembling fingers she placed them upon the lute.

"August Lord," she pleaded, "be pleased to wake again thy silvery strains."

"Let us set sail, set sail to the Land of Morning Calm," he sang softly.

Slowly his lips froze to immobility. The lute fell from his nerveless fingers, the music lingering still upon the vibrant strings.

Seizing a taper from the shrine, the Empress tremblingly held it before his lips. But the flame did not flicker. The gentle monarch had passed to the Land of Morning Calm.

Now it was the custom in Yamato that no woman might rule save in the name of her consort. Therefore the Prime Minister, Takeuchi, adroitly concealed the death of his sovereign, asserting that he had delegated to the Empress the command of the expedition to the Western Land.

To this end he assembled munitions and builded a goodly fleet.

Empress Jingu, erstwhile so belligerent, timorously besought an omen of the gods:

“My departed lord was pleased to commend to me the distaff and needle. Vouchsafe a sign, gracious Sun Goddess. Grant that with a fragile thread I may draw to land a great fish.“

Ravelling from her obi a silken thread and bending her needle into a hook, she baited it with a cherry bloom and cast it into the sea. Scarce had the blossom sunk when the waters boiled in sudden fury and, with terrific lashing of its mighty tail, she drew to land a monstrous shark. Wherefore the spot is called to this day Matsura, the Wonderful.

Again the doubting Empress implored:

“Wide-shining Amaterasu, goddess of Ever-Glorious-Light! if I am destined to subdue the Land of Morning Calm vouchsafe, I pray, another omen. By thy miraculous might, arm thou my body for this enterprise.

Thus beseeching she plunged into the deep. Slowly the fateful moments lagged while the throng waited with bated breath.

Meanwhile, beneath the billows, unseen tire-maidens ministered unto the mazed woman. Uncoiling her jewelled headdress, they knotted her hair in manly guise. On her head they placed a dragon-crested helmet and upon her bosom a breastplate of golden-lacquered steel; in her hand a spear of eight arms length, and girded round her waist, the Sacred Sword.

A mighty shout greeted the Empress as she emerged (mom the sea transformed into a gleaming warrior.

“Sons of Yamato,“ she cried triumphantly, “behold the sign! The Sun Goddess hath armed me for victory!“

Whereat their hearts were filled with joy and, gathering the fleet, they embarked upon the unknown adventure.

Escorting them upon their way all manner of sea-monsters issued from the depths. Tritons blew favourable winds, mermaids pushed the sterns, and sea-dragons seized the cables, flying onward until the prows leaped through the foam-flowered waves.

Sailing by the pavilion of the Emperor, they heard his voice still singing:

"Sail on Beloved, to the Land of Morning Calm!"

After days of fruitless questing at last they sighted land. Lofty mountains and emerald plains loomed through the sapphire haze. Rounding a rugged promontory they entered a tranquil bay, in whose shelter nestled a white-walled city; but a massive chain was stretched across its goodly harbour, forbidding entrance.

Standing at the prow of the foremost galley, the Empress held aloft the Tide-flowing Jewel of Prince Fire-Fade.

Suddenly the waters gathered in a mighty tidal-wave which swept over the flooded city and bore the fleet to the very temple gate.

Deeming this prodigy the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy,[1] the panic-stricken King came forth waving a white banner and knelt before the Empress in token of subjection.

Far into the interior, inundating plains, villages, and cities, swept the tidal wave.

Believing that their country was being swallowed by the ocean, the Koreans swore:

"Until pines of the mountains descend in long procession, and stars of heaven rain upon the sea, so long shall we remain thy loyal subjects."[2]

[1] *Of old an oracle had foretold: "When ships shall walk upon the dry land and a woman lead an army into the temple then shall Korea fall."*

[2] *This prophecy was recalled during the Russo-Japanese war, when the Russians set up in the valley of the Yalu telegraph poles, cut from mountain pines, and their rockets showered the sea with falling stars.*

2. The Quest of the Jewel

In token of their submission the Koreans presented the Empress with the Jewel of Heart's Desire, a wondrous crystal ball flawless in contour and of such exquisite limpidity that its presence could be discerned by touch alone.

In time of peril it emitted fires like the lightning bolt; in peace a radiance as the moon, conferring upon its possessor his heart's desire.

The Empress entrusted the crystal to Takeuchi, who hung it at the masthead, that its kindly rays might guide the helmsman on their homeward course.

Scarce had the army set forth upon its voyage when the jewel flashed its warning flame, as Futen, the Wind God, unloosed a great typhoon and darkness covered the face of the deep.

Now Benten, the dragon's daughter, longed with keen desire to possess the crystal ball. Mounting to the masthead, she tore the jewel from its fastenings and bore it to the depths of the sea.

Terrible was the wrath of the Empress at the loss of the precious treasure. Angrily she commanded that the Prime Minister be denied audience until he should restore the lost talisman.

The journey ended, ruined and disgraced, Takeuchi retired from court. Resolved on self-destruction, he climbed one night to the summit of a cliff.

A fisher-maid, the gentle Tamatori, followed him unseen as he wandered thus, deeming himself alone. Long and silently had she loved the great minister, locking the secret in her woeful heart for

well she knew that only a princess might hope to wed the famous daimio.

Marking his distraught mien, her loving heart boded his fatal purpose:

"Stay, my Lord," she screamed as he ungirded his swords, "relinquish thy resolve, I beseech thee."

In vain he strove to unlock her clinging arms. "Let me die," he commanded, "I am disgraced." Then he told her of the lost crystal and the wrath of the Empress.

"Behold!" she cried, "yonder gleams a wondrous light. Can it be that some great star hath fallen into the sea?"

Thunderstruck Takeuchi gazed into the darkling water.

In its unfathomable depths loomed a coral pagoda of an hundred stories, and, upon its topmost pinnacle, like a lustrous star, glittered the Jewel of Heart's Desire!

"Tis the palace of Benten" he exclaimed wonderingly.

"Be of good cheer," laughed the fisher-maid. "Like a fish can I dive; wait thou here. I shall attain my heart's desire for I shall give thee thine!"

Girding on his swords she leaped into the sea. Down through the emerald water she plunged, until she reached the spire where gleamed the wonder-jewel.

Strange, loathly fish leered at her with great round eyes, as she seized the magic crystal.

Then suddenly the waters were lashed into furious commotion and the vile sea-dragon crawled from his hidden lair. On every side sea-monsters hurried to his call: sharks opened their terrible jaws,

swordfish darted at her, cuttlefish blinded her eyes with their inky spittle, and devilfish entangled her limbs with clinging tentacles; while the dragon stood apart and smiled upon her with his evil smile.

Then Tamatori feared that her hour had come. Knowing that a dragon will not touch a corpse, she plunged her sword into her bosom and thrust the jewel within the gaping wound.

Impotent with wrath the foiled monster slunk slowly away and the waters were calmed.

Long and anxiously had Takeuchi waited; and bitter was his remorse when the lifeless form of the maiden drifted to his feet. Her cold hands, crossed upon her breast, still guarded the coveted treasure, and the smile Upon her pallid face was wondrous to behold.

Takeuchi caused her to be placed upon a lordly catafalque and conveyed with all honour to the capital.

The fame of her noble deed outran the cortege. From every village came maidens bearing garlands; from the temples priests with incense, from the citadel samurai with drums and dirges, even as they would have honoured a general after a great victory.

As they passed through the city gates crowds swarmed about her in wonder. From the palace floated mystic strains of the Emperor's lute.

The Empress knelt at the fisher-maiden's bier. Reverently she placed within the maiden's lifeless hand a patent of nobility, creating her, all too late, Princess of Heart's Desire.

Overjoyed at the recovery of the crystal she elevated to the regency her devoted minister.

If it is true, as some contend, that they were secretly wedded, the ancient chronicles are discreetly silent as to this episode in the career of their militant Empress.

III

URASHIMA

On a dreamy day in springtime I sailed forth to Suminoye,
O'er the hills of jade-green water to the strand of beaten gold;
And as there I lingered, musing on its ancient vanished glory,
I bethought me of the story by the hearthstone often told,
How the fisher Urashima, the bonito ever questing,
O'er the hills of jade-green water past the bounds of sea did roam,
And for seven long suns together, oaring onward, never resting,
Came not back to Suminoye, nor returned unto his home.

After long and fruitless questing, Urashima, melancholy,
Drew, from out the jade-green water, a great tortoise suddenly!
But the tortoise is a symbol of long life, you know, and holy,
So he spared the sacred creature and returned it to the sea.

Fanned by zephyrs, lulled by wavelets, Urashima fell a-dreaming,
When to him there came a vision of a maid surpassing fair,
Came the daughter of the dragon, on his face her radiance beaming,
With the glory of the sunset in the halo of her hair.

Urashima, Urashima," whispered low the dragon's daughter,
"For that thou didst spare the tortoise, little deeming it was I,
Come thou with me to my castle down beneath the jade-green water,
With thy flower-wife, Otohime, e'er to live and ne'er to die!"

Then in joy laughed Urashima and his heart leapt with elation,
For ne'er before had he beheld a maid so wondrous fair;
And right willingly he yielded to her winsome invitation,
So the daughter of the dragon led him to her elfin lair,
To the palace of the dragon, where the nixies guard his treasures,
In the land of ceaseless sunshine down beneath the jade-green sea,
Where they dwelt for generations in a round of endless pleasures,
Never ageing, never dying, ever young and ever free.

And he might have dwelt for ever, with his flower-wife enamoured,

Had not longing stirred within him home and kin once more to see.
"I would fain go to my father, to my mother," thus he stammered,
"After one fond look upon them, I will come again to thee."

Thus he spake, and, sorely troubled, Otohime answered sadly,
"If unto the Land Immortal to return thou e'er wouldst hope,
Here again to live forever, I thy wish do grant thee gladly.
Take this talismanic casket, but beware its lid to ope!"

Strongly did she thus enjoin him, loudly swore he to obey,
And at dawn they fondly parted and he journeyed on his way;
On his way to Suminoye, oared he on the ocean old
O'er the hills of jade-green water to the strand of beaten gold.

But when once he reached the harbour where his home was wont to be,
Naught he saw of Suminoye, not a hut did he behold;
Though he sought from dawn to sunset not a vestige could he see,
Naught but hills of jade-green water and the strand of beaten gold!

Then his heart was rife with wonder and in anguish he did wail:
"In the space of three short summers since I left my village here,
Can it utterly have vanished, leaving naught to tell the tale?
Were I now to ope the casket, would it not again appear?"

And forgetting, reckless fellow, every caution, in dismay
Loosed he then the silken cordage that the magic casket bound,
Whereupon a fleecy cloudlet issued forth into the day,
Talisman of life eternal mounting heavenward from the ground!

Urashima ran and shouted, waving wild his sleeves in air,
Of a sudden then he tottered and fell writhing to the earth,
Withered, wrinkled, old, enfeebled, spent of breath and white of hair!
Tie, who erst had been so youthful, comely, strong, and full of mirth,
Now from life fore'er departed on the strand of beaten gold,
By the hills of jade-green water where stood Suminoye old.

CHAPTER IV

THE LOTUS LIFE

"If thou hast Buddha's sacred fire,
Then art thou like the Lotus white,
Springing in pureness from the mire!"

FOREWORD

IN joyous gratitude to my master the august Prince Umayado (known to posterity as Shotoku Taishi, the Saintly Prince), do I, the humble bonze Fu, of the Temple of Horiuji, dedicate my paltry chronicle.

What time my lord was regent of the Empire, ruling wisely and faithfully for his aunt, the aged Empress Suiko, I, a samurai in his service, shared his martial adventures and the brilliant life of courts. Now, alas, am I but a lonely priest, doomed to expiate my countless sins of former existences by mumbling interminable orisons to the accompaniment of a brazen gong.

In moments snatched from my devotional duties have I compiled these memories of manifold misfortunes now sweet to the taste as cooling *sake* upon the parched lips of age.



(Hokusai)



On an exceeding windy morning, I encountered the winsome maid, Ruddy Peachling"

(Hokusai)

Juvabit Meminisse

If but long enough I dream
Then perchance these present hours
May again appear to me
Just as childhood moments seem
Fraught with fragrant memory.

HYAKUNIN-ISSHU.

I

LOVE'S SACRIFICE

Admonition

Where, by Sumida's tide sweet cherries blow,
Showering their snowflake petals on the stream,
The smiling damsels loiter to and fro,
Fairer than blossoms white, their eyes agleam,
Wherefore, if you would heed my counsel wise,
Beware to look upon those lustrous eyes;
Nor thither roam, but safe at home abide
When blossoms bloom by swift Sumida's tide.

What time the autumn moon with radiance bright
Floodeth the leafy wold with silvery light,
Sudden from out the shadows there will gleam
A maiden's face, more fair than moonlit stream!
Then better 'twere to turn your steps aside
Than go moon-gazing by Sumida's tide.

The sages of the golden age of yore
Lived arduous days and scorned all earthly ties.
Think ye that ye will gain the light of lore
Beholding moonbeams in a maiden's eyes?
Nay! by a lonely path must ye aspire,
If ye would e'er attain the sacred fire.

Lo! threescore years have I with Shaka sought
The light of Wisdom, shining through the gloom.
Full many a youth I've seen to madness brought
Through moon-light roaming mid the Cherry-Bloom.

AZUMI RYOSAI.

It fortuned upon an exceeding windy morning that I encountered the winsome maid O Momo San (Ruddy Peachling), whose skirts the

wanton breezes fluttered with such seductive audacity, that, had not the dust blinded mine eyes, I might have accosted the wench with unseemly flatteries.

Poring that day over the sacred tomes I came upon this curiously apt scripture:

"Through gazing at the ivory-white shins of a maiden washing clothes the Wizard of Kume fell from his magic chariot, and was drowned in Sumida's stream."

Nathless I took no warning, and one lovely summer evening Prince Umayado surprised me moon-roaming with Ruddy Peachling beneath the cherry-bloom.

"Alas, thou Merry One," thus he upbraided me. "Didst thou but dream—

"What utter dole doth lie
  Beholding moonbeams in a maiden's eye!
Loth wouldst thou be beneath the trees to hie
  On April nights moon-gazing at the sky."

Whereupon Ruddy Peachling retorted:

"Didst thou but dream what bliss for thee doth lie
  In unbeholden moonbeams in her eye,
Whose radiance thou dost mercilessly scorn,
  Wouldst quit thy couch, and roam the meads till morn."

Anent my moon-gazings with the lovesome Ruddy Peachling much might be recounted—but that were another chronicle.

Prince Umayado was like his countenance, gentle, spiritual, and calm. Overmuch study had given him the look of one who, aloof from earth, walks the high, untrodden ways of passionless delight. Yet was his sympathy ever ready, and cruelty stirred him to relentless wrath.

Learned was he in the ancient sutras, and in all manner of curious arts; but naught dreamed he of the endless wiles, witchery, and loveliness of womankind, concerning whom the Sanskrit Bôdhisattva wrote:

Long ages gone, as ancient sutras tell,
  Twashti, the blacksmith, did the earth create,
Welding each metal with such lavish spell
  That beggared were the mines of Chaos great.
Then, since to fashion woman naught was left
  Each creature of some trifle he bereft.

He stole the roundness of the silver moon,
  The grace of clinging tendrils for her arm,
The doe's calm gaze, the nightingale's sweet tune,
  The serpent's silent stealth, its power to charm,
The coo of doves, the raindrop's merry patter,
  The parrot's scolding and its senseless chatter.

The modest shrinking of the tender grass,
  The pride of peacocks of their plumes elate,
Softness of roses, stubbornness of brass,
  The dog's devotion and the tiger's hate,
The wanton breeze's coy solicitude,
  The fears of hares who hunters swift elude.

Thus in the cauldron cunningly combined
  Were heat of fiercest flame, of snow the chill,
Tears of the rain and fickleness of wind,
  The diamond's firmness, laughter of the rill,
Of these and much beside did Twashti great
  Woman, man's blessing and his curse, create.

KOYOSHI.

Such a pretty paradox was the Princess White Chrysanthemum. Compounded was she of such unforeseen pranks and whimsies that

none could comprehend her heart; nay not even did the Princess know herself.

Now Prince Umayado loved the wilful damsel right manfully and besought her oft and ardently, deeming from sundry glances and flushings of her ivory cheeks that the prideful Princess was not unmindful of his love.

But with witching coquetry the obdurate maiden withheld surrender.

It chanced upon a day that a certain rebel chieftain, one Mono-nobe, whose ambition soared to heaven and whose treachery sounded the depths of hell, met with the Princess as she walked in the palace garden.

"Prince Umayado," he asserted vehemently, "is a sexless monk, enwrapt in this strange new cult of the Koreans."

"Is this the faith they call the Lotus Life, taught by a holy Buddha?" questioned White Chrysanthemum.

"By Benten I know not," replied Mono-nobe. "But one day, wandering to their temple, I heard the Bonze Fu discoursing the whiles he hammered upon a brazen gong:

"'Observe, my children,' he droned, 'the beasts and the birds! They love their consorts and suffer pangs of jealousy and wrath—therefore is love a thing bestial and unworthy the soul of man."

"Spake he thus, indeed," quoth the Princess, "and is Umayado thus heartless?"

"Aye," answered Mono-nobe, "a being utterly passionless, impotent to love or hate. Grant me, O Princess, the jewel he doth scorn; give me in sooth thine ever radiant self."

Whereupon White Chrysanthemum demanded:

“Wouldst thou wed me were I dowerless?“ Mono-nobe mused, leering at her through his slanted eyelids. “Forfeit not the empire,“ counselled the hypocrite, “but wed Umayado and grant me still thy love.“

The eyes of the Princess flashed fire, but, cloaking her indignation under a smile, she guilefully demanded:

“Honourable lord, how might this be?“

“The way is simple,“ he answered. “Upon thy wedding night will I slay the Prince. Then wilt thou be to wed with whom it pleaseth thee.“

Of a sudden the boughs parted and Prince Umayado stood before them wide-eyed, pallid, and relentless:

“Princess,“ he declared, “I hereby renounce heirship to the throne; and, since thou lovest Mono-nobe, do give him unto thee!“

Whereupon came the Prince to the Empress Suiko.

“August Sovereign,“ he besought, “I crave thy sanction that I may renounce the world and devote myself to a life of meditation.“

Nathless not a word did he breathe of the treachery of Mono-nobe, lest he might soil the name of her he loved.

Whereupon the Empress was exceeding wroth. “Bonze me no bonzes,“ she cried. “To thee alone do I entrust the Empire, for there is none other fit to mate with my prideful daughter.“

Umayado winced, as though struck upon an unhealed wound. “Methinks, August Empress,“ he said, “thou dost little know the Princess, since from her very lips have I heard that her heart is given to Mono-nobe.“

By evil chance it fortuned that Mono-nobe also sought audience with the Empress and openly avowed himself the lover of the Princess.

To the indignant denials of her daughter the mother would not listen: "Thou shalt wed this knave forthwith," commanded the infuriated Empress.



Our merry monks passed their hours in a ceaseless round of revels, pranks and pleasantries"
(Hokusai)



“I sprang into the basket and ferried myself across the chasm“
(Hokusai)

White as her name-flower paled the Princess: “I will wed with none but my Umayado,“ she murmured. Her mother laughed scornfully: “Fool, the Prince will none of thee. Even now did he renounce succession to the throne for sake of Buddha.“

Wherefore, sorely against her will, was the White Chrysanthemum wedded with the black-souled Mononobe.

When the bridegroom went to the nuptial chamber he found the raiment of his bride strewn heedlessly upon the floor; but the Princess had vanished none knew whither!

II

OF MARVELLOUS MISUNDERSTANDINGS CONCERNING A PARASOL AND A HORSE

Our merry monks of Horiuji passed their hours in a ceaseless round of revels, pranks, and pleasantries.

The butt of their jests was a half-witted lad, Kawaki, who swept the manifold mats and illumined the temple tapers.

Pardon, honourable Reader, this playful digression, for, incredible though it seem, this dullard was destined to become the guiding deity through whom my master discovered his lost Princess.

But here I outrun the march of my chronicle. Let me set down these happenings in due sequence without haste or confusion.

On a certain day Kawaki astounded me with the confession that he had given my most precious parasol to a beggar.

"Lumpkin!" quoth I, "thou shouldst have denied this request, making such courteous and soft answer that the suppliant would have departed contented."

"How, Master, should I have spoken?" stammered the witling.

"In some such wise as this:

"'Honourable Pilgrim, on what auspicious errand dost honour my humble dwelling?

"'Wouldst borrow a parasol? Joyfully I haste to render this trifling service.'

"Then, my wise Kawaki, thou shouldst have offered my meanest parasol, since ne'er would we behold its face again, lamenting the whiles: 'Woe is me that I find it in such sorry case. My master while holding it above his head encountered a gust of wind, whereby all its ribs were broken, and its skin blown over the pagoda. Naught now remains, alas, but its beautiful handle, which I fear will scarce serve thine honourable purpose.' Thus shouldst thou speak, that thy words be wise and courteous."

Now it fortuned on a day that Prince Umayado despatched a samurai to the temple in quest of a horse.

Whereupon the witless Kawaki made answer:

"Woe is me that I find myself unable to comply with thine august request, since, while holding it above his head, my master encountered a gust of wind, whereby all its ribs were broken and its skin blown over the pagoda. Naught remains, alas, but its beautiful tail, which I fear will scarce serve thine honourable purpose."

Thereupon I berated him soundly, the whiles he whimpered: "These very words, Master, didst thou bid me speak!"

"Fool!" I cried, "an thou liest (and a pretty lie is a heaven-descended succour in time of trouble), order thy speech so like the truth that none may be the wiser."

"Tell me, master," implored Kawaki, "how I should have answered."



Prince Umayado
From “In Japan“ by Gaston Migeon



"All merciful Kwannon embodied in the form of his beloved princess"
From "In Japan" by Gaston Migeon



"Crouched beneath a maple tree, with ankles crossed, as holy Buddhas sit"
(Hokusai)

"Verily, since I have need of a horse that I may carry Ruddy Peachling to a fair, thou mightest have spoken thus: 'Joyfully would I render thee this trifling service, most august Prince, but my master turned him out to grass and, becoming frolicsome, he fell, dislocated

his thigh, and is now lying, much swollen, on the stable floor. I fear therefore that he will scarce serve thine honourable purpose."

Now it came to pass that a courier brought to the temple a mandate requiring the presence of Prince Umayado at court.

Whereupon did this addlepate answer: "Joyfully would the Prince render thee this trifling service, but toy master turned him out to grass and, becoming frolicsome, he carried Ruddy Peachling on his back to the fair, fell, dislocated his thigh, and is now lying, much swollen, upon the stable floor. I fear therefore he will scarce serve thine honourable purpose."

III

THE FLAME OF LIFE

Many and contrary were the surmises of all concerning the whereabouts of White Chrysanthemum. Mononobe spread a malicious report that Prince Umayado had abducted the lost Princess. There were others who maintained that she had slain herself rather than yield to the loathed embraces of Mono-nobe.

When I ventured to broach this opinion to the Prince he protested:

"Nay, methinks the Princess but lieth in hiding waiting release from this loveless bondage."

When the Empress told him of the words of White Chrysanthemum: "I will wed with none but my Umayado," then first came to my Prince an understanding of her wondrous white-souled love.

For twelve weary months he sought through the length and breadth of the kingdom; but despite his untiring zeal no trace could he discover of her whom he loved.

At last hope died within his heart, and he strove to realize the peace which, Buddha taught, cometh through renunciation.

The Lotus Life

"All things," said Shaka sage, "are merely dream!
  Like silly apes, who see within a well
The shining moon reflected for a spell,
  We vainly strive to clutch the silver beam,
Mistaking for the truth its imaged gleam,
  Dupes of illusion void we fondly dwell
In folly's paradise, an empty shell,
  Not knowing joy is root of rue supreme.

Then banish all desire and pleasures shun,
  And lift your hearts from thought of death's dread gloom.
As sleeps the flower within its wintry tomb,
  Blooming anew with Spring's benignant sun;
So shall ye find from sorrow sure surcease,
  And sleeping wake again in ceaseless peace."

KOYOSHI.

Each night the Prince bent over the sutras seeking extinction of desire, but though he laboured till the break of day the image of her whom he loved hovered ever before his imagination, banishing the peace of Buddha from his troubled soul.

His heart cried unceasingly:

Though I may not pluck to-day
  Yet again I fain would see
That pure violet of May,
  Left ungathered once by me.

(MOTOERI.)

In unremitting toil he strove to crush his love. He plunged anew into turmoil of life, solving the problems of the state, giving to his country her first code of laws, and spreading enlightenment among his people. From Korea he summoned priests, architects, sculptors,

and artificers, who builded him a vast monastery, a convent for holy women, and a lofty pagoda, like the stalk of some magic lily shooting upward toward the stars.

Watching the sculptors at their work a desire awoke within him to carve a statue which should surpass all others in spirituality and grace, an embodiment of Kwannon, the all-merciful goddess, who forswore Paradise that she might more fittingly minister to the sorrowful sons of men.

Laboriously he chiselled the unwilling wood; but the elusive goddess refused to be conjured forth.

Upon a midsummer night when a silvern moon sailed idly in the heavens, and earth was rife with song of myriad nightingales, my Prince gazed from his "Hall of Dreams."

In the ebon depths of the lotus pool floated a celestial vision. A goddess, white, vague, and evanescent, glided mysteriously toward him.

Smiling she stretched forth wide appealing arms. In a voice of haunting sweetness the vision spake:

"O thou who deemest thyself forsaken, lift up thine heart. Kwannon, the all-merciful, pitieth thy sorrow and will bring thee love."

Rapt with wonder and awe Umayado strove to kiss the hem of her fluttering robe, but the goddess vanished, leaving but brimming water upon his eager lips.

All night he laboured the whiles, under deft strokes of his mallet, the dead wood assumed the living semblance. At break of day, his chisel still in hand, sleep fell upon the weary sculptor.

Wondrous was the statue in form and colour and my Prince, amazed at his own workmanship, reverently enthroned it in a golden-lacquered shrine.

Morn and eve he prayed before his statue. Throughout long days of toil and nights of loneliness came a nameless solace, a calm, submissive trust in the goddess that tranquillized his love-deluded soul.

One evening he gazed upon the statue with enraptured eyes, dreaming within his heart:

As fragrant incense smoulders slow away
    So wastes my life in unattained desire.
This earthen censer, seared by passion's fire,
    A shattered shard, returneth to the clay
Wherewith 'twas fashioned once upon a day.
    The glowing embers of life's flaming pyre,
Fanned by vain hope, through disillusion dire
    Slowly consumed to ashes cold and grey.

But should the goddess at whose shrine I kneel
    Bestow fresh aloes on the embers dead,
The flame would kindle and the incense rise
    Seeking anew immeasurable skies,
And living fragrance all around be shed,
    For love again this burned-out heart would feel!

Then of a sudden a sweet voice called his name and, lifting his head, the Prince beheld, through clearing rifts of incense, All-Merciful Kwannon embodied in the form of his beloved Princess.

Descending from her golden lotus-blossom the divinity folded warm human arms about the bewildered worshipper and laid his head upon her bosom!

Tenderly he led her into the moon-silvered garden. And as they wandered 'neath the cherry-bloom I know not in what words they voiced their great felicity; save that I heard the Princess murmur:

"Beloved, my joy is now so great I fear some secret doom!"

IV

THE LAW OF MIGHT

Now it came to pass that the Empress fell sick of a strange malady, which the Shinto priests averred to be a chastisement for her desertion of the old religion.

Believing his sovereign to be at death's door, Mononobe fomented a great uprising and proclaimed himself Emperor.

With a mob of frenzied fanatics he descended upon Horiuji, burned the monastery, razed the convent, and put the defenceless inmates to the sword.

"By the mace of Bishamon!" cried my master, "for this shall Mononobe die!"

Even as he spake there fell upon his knees before him a woeful figure besprent with mire and blood.

"Who art thou?" cried Umayado, but the grovelling creature answered not, save by inarticulate moans. Then, opening his mouth, he revealed a bloody cavity, whence his tongue had been torn.

"It is Kawaki," exclaimed the Prince. "This thing hath Mono-nobe done!"

The youth bowed assent.

"Whither hath he fled?" demanded Umayado.

The mute pointed to the mountains.

"Bore he thither captive the holy priestesses?"

Lifting two mutilated fingers Kawaki strove most piteously to speak. Of a sudden he ran to the garden, and returning, laid before the Prince a *red peach* and a *white chrysanthemum!*

Lifting the lad to his saddle, Umayado summoned his samurai and fared forth in quest of the Princess.

Up a steep and tortuous road we wended, along the mange of beetling cliffs overhanging a foaming torrent. After many a weary mile, upon the brink of a sheer abyss we beheld a mighty castle jutting its turrets into the cloudless sky. Whereupon we gathered about our leader, taking counsel amongst ourselves.

Of a sudden upon the topmost tower fluttered a silken banner.

"Behold! the white chrysanthemum!" he cried. "Kwannon be praised, the Princess bideth within."

With that the Prince blew a great blast upon his horn. Whereupon Mono-nobe, clad cap-à-pie in lacquered armour, came forth upon a balcony.

"Wouldst parley with me, Priest?" he shouted.

"Nay malefactor," retorted the other, "but with the captive Princess. Announce to her forthwith that Umayado craveth audience."

Muttering imprecations Mono-nobe turned upon his heel, and withdrew within the castle.

Somewhile we waited till he came again, bowing obsequiously.

"The Princess granteth thy prayer, augustly honourable lord," he fawned, "so thou comest alone."

"First give me sight of her, caitiff, for in sooth I trust thee not," demanded Umayado.

Growling within his beard, Mono-nobe was about to reply, when the Princess, ghost-white and fair as a goddess stepped forth upon the balcony.

“Venture not within the castle!“ she cried, “there lurketh treachery and death!“

Clutching her throat the infuriated ruffian thrust White Chrysanthemum back into her prison.

Maddened by that sight, Umayado drave the rowels deep into his steed and bounded across the draw-bridge.

With clang of bolt and rattle of chain it rose, severing my master from us by a gulf impassable.

V

THE CHASTISEMENT OF THE GODS

Well we deemed that our Prince was doomed; nor could we devise any means to compass his deliverance.

Wherefore, with a few sturdy knaves, I fetched a circuit about the castle spying if there might be other port of entry. But on all sides was it moated about by a wide and deep abyss, and other bridge or portal was there none.

Howbeit, in the course of my rambling, I chanced upon some woodsmen felling trees upon the brink of the castle moat. To my amazed delight I perceived a cord, stretched from a tree to the lower story of the castle; and a travelling crate, in which the foresters were transporting fuel to the cellars.

Descending suddenly upon the unsuspecting woodsmen, we stripped them of their raiment and attired ourselves therewith. Bidding my men follow, I sprang to the basket and ferried myself across the chasm to the castle cellars.

One by one, in like manner, my lusty rascals climbed into the crate and propelled themselves across the deep abyss.

When all had crossed I bade them wait, crouching silently within the charcoal pen until call, the whiles I mounted to the kitchens.

Mistaking me for a woodsman, the cook welcomed me with a savory mess of toothsome carp from the castle moat.

“The Princess be here,“ he boasted, as I praised his cookery.

“Nay that will I in no wise credit,“ I shrugged, “save I see her with these mine eyes.“

“Out upon thee, yokel, to deem thyself worthy to gaze upon the beauteous White Chrysanthemum! That canst thou not forsooth. But here cometh one who will certify the truth of that I speak.“

With this there ran into the kitchen, her terror-wide eyes starting from a blanched face, my little Ruddy Peachling!

“Kwannon have mercy!“ she cried. “They have lured the good Prince Umayado hither to certain death.“

“Lead me to the Prince forthwith,“ I commanded; and shouting: “To the rescue my good rascals!“ we charged after Ruddy Peachling.

Indeed we had no great need of her guidance, for a tumult had arisen in the great hall whither we rushed to the deliverance of our master.

“Men of Mono-nobe, are ye samurai or dogs?“ out-rang the voice of the Princess. “Stand back all. Let them fight a fair fight, and the gods give victory to the better cause!“

A clash of steel and the swords of Umayado and Mono-nobe flashed above us.

The rebel chieftain howled imprecations as he hacked and slashed.

The Prince, silent, cool, and relentless, deftly countered.

Thus they fought, furiously, craftily, like lion and tiger, till of a sudden Mono-nobe warded a swinging slash and caught the Prince a sharp blow which sent his blade flying.

Seizing a mace from a bystander, Umayado crashed it on the head of his adversary and Mono-nobe crumpled instantly upon the floor, his skull crushed in.

A mighty roar rang forth from the dead man's ruffians as they surged forward to tear the Prince limb from limb.

Scarce had they drawn sword when my good fellows fell upon them from behind and hewed a path through their ranks. They outnumbered us two to one, brave men all and trained fighters, yet steadily we gained ground and fought our way to the Prince.

"Save the Princess!" he cried, and, clustering together, we formed a wall about them and hacked through that pack of wolves to the castle-court. Then my blood congealed to ice as I beheld the abysmal moat that yawned beyond us. All hope was lost, for a band of samurai guarded the lifted drawbridge.

"Trapped, ye rats!" they yelled, laughing fiendishly, as they caught the despair written upon our blanched faces.

Then fought we but the more desperately, as men, knowing they must die, sell their lives most dearly.

Suddenly the Prince espied a great kettle of oil. Seizing a torch from a cresset he flung it into the cauldron. Clouds of smoke and blinding flame burst forth as a fearsome ally came to our rescue.

"Fire! fire!" shrieked hundreds of frantic soldiery; and the terror-stricken warder flung down the drawbridge.

Crying: “Save not yourselves alone, but all our fallen foes,“ the Prince leaped to the back of his stallion and lifting White Chrysanthemum to the saddle galloped across the trembling planks.

Fighting indiscriminately for precedence in flight, our foes rushed forth to safety.

But we, mindful of the mandate of the Prince, bore from that flaming hell each one a wounded enemy. Last of all came Kawaki with the corpse of Mono-nobe. Wherefore I marvelled, until from the lofty bridge he hurled his grewsome burden into the yawning chasm.

Then understood I, for Kawaki was a Fire Worshipper and would not suffer the soul of Mono-nobe to mount purified by flame to the Eternal Land, but committed it to wolves and kites.

AFTERWORD

My garden is a lovesome thing to view,
    A tangle of bright bloom and darkling green,
Frail fronded fern, a plashing brook between,
    And lichen-lacquered stones of every hue
Whose mossy fissures flame with lithe bamboo.
    Gnarled, pigmy pines their writhen branches lean,
Like goblins in the moonlight‘s ghostly sheen,
    O‘er elfin flowers, besprent with gleaming dew.

Like clouds of rosy smoke, the cherry-bloom
    Its wreathed incense softly round me rolls,
And, in the pleachèd shades of fragrant gloom,
    A fountain leaps ecstatic toward the skies,
Ever to fall, like our star-soaring souls,
    To earth again, ever anew to rise!

What further remaineth to chronicle?

All the world knoweth how Prince Umayado subdued the rebellion, united the worship of Buddha with the ancient Shinto faith, and was

honoured by his country with the title of Shotoku Taishi (the Saintly Prince).

I have seen my long-suffering master rewarded for all his trials by the wondrous constancy and love of the Princess White Chrysanthemum.

I have seen Ruddy Peachling blossom from maid to bride — not mine, alas! but the wife of Kawaki. Happy is she. Why should not a woman be content who may prate and chatter to her heart's desire for her husband may not answer back?

I, a dim-eyed bonze, am also happy, while, with ankles crossed, as holy Buddhas sit, I couch me, neath a maple-tree in my lovesome garden and muse upon friends and days departed. Verily

Our fleeting life is like a boat,
    That with the dawn doth seaward float,
Leaving no trace behind!

(MANYOSHIU.)

CHAPTER V

A MIKADO AND A GEISHA

I

She toddles by on cloven-stockinged feet;
 A white plum-blossom in her raven hair,
Combed in large, lustrous coils with endless care,
 Framing the ivory oval of her sweet
And placid face, where slanted eyebrows meet,
 Like tiny bridges on her forehead fair,
O'er eyes, whose tranquil depths so debonair
 Know naught of struggle, triumph, or defeat.

As with a childlike smile, a glance demure
 And flutter of her dainty painted fan
And swish of silk-embroidered robe, she seems
 A winged elfling from a land of dreams,
A floating lotus-blossom, frail and pure,
 This little, laughing maid, O Ume San.

UME SAN (Plum Blossom) was the fairest Geisha in the kingdom.

From Nikko to Nagasaki none could whirl the broidered draperies with such seductive grace, nor touch the plaintive samisen with more entrancing art.

In all Nara there was not a finer foot or whiter hand and her eyes—“twin jets in a lake of milk!“

And so it befell that when the heaven-descended Prince Yorimito espied her in the sacred rice-field, where he kept vigil upon the night before his coronation, he was beside himself with wonder and delight.

Vague and mystical she loomed in the silver moonbeams, her black hair streaming in lustrous waves about her pallid face.

"Princess, if mortal thou mayst be," spake the Mikado, "deign to tell me who thou art, for ne'er have I beheld a maid so fair."

"In sooth I am but a simple Geisha, called O Ume San," she answered timidly.

The Prince smiled approval.

"Good my Lord, grant me pardon that, over-bold, I have disturbed thy holy vigil." The voice was that of a child, wondrous sweet, thrilling him to the very soul.

"Well content am I, sweet maiden, that thou hast sought me thus," he replied, "but what mission, I pray, bringeth thee hither in the dead of night?"



Sipping sweet sake from quaint potteries"
(Kiyonaga)

"A wicked light gleamed in the eyes of Fujiwara"



"Then a noisome bed beneath the lotus!"
(Sharaku)

Tremblingly Plum Blossom peered into the shadows. “August Sovereign,“ she faltered, “thy very life is in peril, the Fujiwara doth plot to poison thee!“

Yorimito caught his breath suddenly. “Poison,“ he mused dazedly. “Why doth he seek my death?“

“A living death hath he in store,“ replied the Geisha. “How thinketh he to compass this?“ the Prince demanded.

“Through me. He doth command by secret drugs to sap thy strength until thy soul shall rot. Beloved Sovereign, I implore thee, set not foot within his trap. Beware the Fujiwara, beware of me!“

With a rustling of silken robes O Ume San vanished in the shadows. A cock crew. A stroke of green, glowing slowly to gold, was drawn by a mighty brush across the canvas of the sky.

The sacred vigil had ended; Yorimito was Emperor of Japan.

Through the solemn coronation ceremonies a vision flitted ever before his eyes—the spirit-maiden of the rice-fields.

“Beware of me!“ she had commanded; but by the eight hundred myriad deities he would not heed her warning!

II

The lichen-lacquered lanterns gleaming bright
 Loom in long lines between tall camphor trees,
Guarding the dusky shrine where, in the breeze,
 Flutter frail gonfalons of gold and white.
Like silken sails of Dawn‘s wan silver light
 Against the wine-dark murk of sunless seas,
They rise and float their dragon draperies
 Upon the sea of ebon-plumèd night.
Spirits of ancestors, dead samurai,
 Teem in the sacred wood and hover near;

Daemons and Devas with the evil eye
Inhabit the lithe herd of dappled deer
That browse within the forest's pleachèd shade;
Each sloe-eyed doe, erstwhile a gentle maid.

Shrined in roseate cherry-bloom, mid dusky groves of sandal and camphor, smiles the imperial park of Kasuga.

Along the shadowy avenue thousands of ancestral lanterns loom like samurai in review. Mild-eyed gazelles browse in verdant glades. Glittering goldfish glide in the dusky lotus pools. Cloud-white wistaria droop pendant clusters from the lichened trees.

Within this paradise nestled a pleasure-pavilion wherein lurked a deadly serpent — the Fujiwara, Kambaku, plotting the ruin of his sovereign.

"O Ume San," he whispered, as he furtively mingled seeds of the slumbrous poppy with the gloom-dispelling sake in a brew of deadly potency, "to thee I confide a most delicate task. Ply the Mikado with this potion until it doth lull his senses to sodden sleep. Then filch from him the signet, with which he is wont to seal his imperial mandates, and fetch to me this talisman of power."

Plum Blossom tossed her glorious tresses. "And if I refuse?"

"Then a noisome bed beneath the lotus! But verily thou wilt not refuse. Thine ambition is one with mine. When thou hast won the Mikado thou shalt bend him to my will."

O Ume San laughed mockingly. "When I have wedded my lord I shall bend him to my will."

"Wed the Mikado!" he sneered. "Art so simple as to deem thyself worthy—thou, a Geisha?"

The eyes of Plum Blossom flashed flame as she cried, "Ay, that I am, were he a thousand times an Emperor!"

Amazed by her audacity, Kambaku assented: “Well might it be, wert thou of other birth.“

“Tell me, I implore thee, the secret of my parentage,“ pleaded the Geisha.

“Seek not to know, for on that day the Emperor will cast thee forth. Be content with love, nor hope to be his wife!“

A scarlet flame swept her cheek as she abased herself in simulated submission.

“Nay, Kambaku,“ she smiled within herself, “still shall I save him from thee!“

The Garden of the Geisha

Singing, like shrill cicadas in the trees,
    Strumming on samisen with fingers fleet,
To plaintive flute and rhythmic tambour beat,
    They fill the night with elfin revelries.
A wicked light gleamed in the eyes of the Fujiwara.

Sipping sweet sake from quaint potteries
    And dancing on deft silken sandalled feet,
Swift speed the hours within this blithe retreat,
    As whirl the Geisha their bright draperies.

Like golden moths they hover, glide, and flit
    Within the shadows of the garden cool
Or silent and impassive cross-legged sit,
    Like brazen Buddhas, round the lotus-pool,
While over all the samisen intones
    Its poignant music, like a dove‘s low moans.

Lights glittered in the geisha-garden and amorous strains floated from secluded balconies. Within the pavilion, fireflies gleaming in

their dusky hair, graceful Geisha flitted before the youthful monarch in a bewildering measure of butterflies and flowers.

Yorimito thrust his untouched sake-cup aside and scanned in vain each passing face.

With glare of lightning and thunder of drums, whirling their flaming raiment in tempestuous flight, the furies of the Storm God Futen flashed swiftly before him.

Despite their blithe allurements Yorimito wearied of the deft-footed Geisha, and joyless and distraught strode forth into the garden.

Through the moon-silvered dusk he wandered, seeking ever the one he loved. Fair flower-maidens lured and caressed him with rose-red lips smiling for his delight; but ever the disappointed lover flung them off, crying:

“Thou art not she I fain would find.“

Of a sudden the pine-boughs parted, and, gleaming in the moonlight like a silvery lotus, stood O Ume San.

Clasping her to his breast Yorimito whispered:

“Flower of my heart, I hunger for thy love!“

For a moment she lay unresisting in his arms, then, as his hot breath fanned her cheek, struggled free.

“Forgive me,“ he pleaded, “I meant thee no dishonour. Till death shall I worship thee.“

“Thus is my love for thee,“ murmured Plum Blossom; “thee, and thee only, so long as my soul hath being!“

There was silence betwixt them for a space, then, taking the golden chain, from which depended the imperial signet, he laid it upon her shoulders, saying:

“Thus I make thee captive, chained with bonds of love!“

The Geisha‘s eyes grew wide with fear:

“Tis the same the Fujiwara bade me steal!“ Then unloosing the chain with trembling fingers she gave back the precious signet.

“My Lord,“ she cried, “for thy life renounce not to Kambaku this talisman of power!“

III

Kambaku grovelled upon the ground before the Emperor:

“What is thine august pleasure?“ he fawned.

“Trusted Servitor,“ replied Yorimito, “thou hast among thy Geisha a certain singing-maid, O Ume San, whom I fain would purchase. Tell me, I pray, if thou wouldst part with her and for what price.“

With folded arms the Fujiwara pondered, scanning furtively the Emperor‘s face.

“What is her value in thy sight, most august Sovereign?“

“She is indeed a pearl beyond all price. Were I to measure her worth in gold ‘twould beggar my treasury.“

Kambaku smiled assent: “Even so, Lord, hold I her in priceless estimation. She hath not her like in the kingdom; and for all thy wealth I would not barter her.“

“Stay, be not so hasty. I will yield thee of new-coined pieces her weight in gold. Hath ever man paid greater price?“

The light of avarice gleamed momently in the eyes of Kambaku, then he shook his head.

“A greater guerdon would I fain request, a goodlier boon, though but an idle honour thou couldst not gainsay,“ he purred with simulated humility. “Do me but the favour to requite my trifling act by elevating thy servant to the post of Keeper of the Seal. So shall the girl be thine.“

“Yorimito stammered: ‘Twas but a bauble of carven jade“



“O Ume San uttered a stifled sob“
(Toyokuni)



"Plum Blossom smiled: 'The Queen is little worth,' she said, 'so that my King is free!'"
From "Old-World Japan" by T. H. Robinson

Yorimito frowned. That would be to confer upon the Fujiwara absolute power of life and death, he reflected, when his reverie was broken by the voice of O Ume San singing behind the lattice:

"Life held no joys and death no fears
  Ere first I met with thee.
But now, howe'er so long my years,
  Too brief they seem to me."

(YOSHITAKE.)

"The seal is thine," cried the Emperor. "Hadst thou demanded the very throne the price were not too great!"

IV
THE GEISHA

As smoothly as a wavelet laps the strand
  She melts from pose to pose with fluent grace,
Long swirling curves her broidered garments trace,
  A flickering flame to lambent motion fanned
By pliant wrist and slender rhythmic hand;
  While from the ivory oval of her face
Asia's slant eyes, through lids of filmy lace
  Smile sadly forth with gaze serene and bland.

To strumming samisen and droning drum
  She postures slowly with consummate art,
Her lips, as those of some pale priestess, dumb,
  Wreathed in a smile of elfin mystery,
Her eyes demure as childhood, and her heart
  Unfathomed as the deep's infinity.

Trancéd days sped by, wherein Yorimito found ever in his betrothed some new revelation of infinite variety.

"Soon, Beloved One, shall we drink the nuptial sake," he exclaimed joyously.

Plum Blossom smiled. "Lord, my cup of happiness were overflowing, shouldst thou but grant me one little boon."

“Thou knowest, dearling, there is naught I may deny thee.“

Trembling the Geisha drew from her girdle a silken purse.

“Lo, here are a score of silver pieces I have hoarded from my paltry earnings. Do thou, august Master, take them to Kambaku and buy my freedom.“

Yorimito smiled indulgently, thinking what great price he had paid:

“Thou art free, little Blossom, free as the air thou breathest. Even now did I redeem thee from the Fujiwara for my very own.“

“Yet am I still a slave, though bound in bonds of willing love. Suffer me Lord, to ransom myself of thee.“

“Wherefore wouldst thou seek freedom?“ he demanded in sudden alarm.

“That I may give myself back to thee,“ she laughed, nestling coyly in his arms.

“Tell me, Master mine, what sum did that usurer extort, ere he yielded thy worthless slave?“

Yorimito stammered. “Twas but a trifle, a bauble of carven jade.“

O Ume San uttered a stifled sob:

“Beloved,“ she cried reproachfully, “thou didst not heed my warning! The Fujiwara will make of thee a powerless Puppet-Emperor, the whiles he ruleth tyrant in thy stead!“

“Nay, his presumption shall not go unpunished,“ cried the Mikado.

Then suddenly bethinking himself: “Alas, no longer may I mete justice upon him! He alone wields power of life and death. He hath *the Seal!*“

V

A vague sense of impending doom clouded the present joys of O Ume San, a dread she could not banish of the certain vengeance of the Fujiwara.

Amidst her forebodings she strove to find distraction in divers pastimes. Of these the one in which she took most delight was the game of chess. Beneath a bower of oleanders, she played one summer's day with a sister Geisha, Jasmine.

Of a sudden her opponent clapped her hands: "I have won!" she laughed.

"Tis true," assented Plum Blossom moodily; "but hadst thou known the stake thou wouldst have yielded me the game."

"What secret gage didst thou venture?" demanded the other.

"My life against the Fujiwara," sighed Plum Blossom.

"Daikoku aid us, that we devise some stratagem by which thou yet mayst win."

"First must I save my Queen, whom the Black Knight threatens," cried Plum Blossom.

"Then wilt thou lose thy King," warned Jasmine. "Thou must sacrifice the Queen; there is no other way. Then shall the Black Knight be taken, and thy King be saved."

Plum Blossom smiled. "The Queen is little worth," she said, "so that my King go free!"

A shadow fell across the board. Glancing upward O Ume San beheld a samurai standing over her.

Bowing courteously he extended to her a sealed missive.

Breaking the silken thread Plum Blossom read with beating heart:

Beloved:

> I have been grievously wounded, and lie at the monastery of Yakushiji. Come to me in all haste.

Thy Yorimito, to whom death may be very near.

A palanquin waited at the postern, and O Ume San, reeking naught but the peril of her lover, entered unquestioning. Neither did she note that the bearers wore the Fujiwara crest, nor suspect aught until something tapped lightly against the lacquered panels. Peering forth Plum Blossom beheld, drawn closely about her, the meshes of a net.

Naught availed that she shrieked and beat upon the door. Bystanders merely raised their eyebrows and, muttering: "Tis some drunken Geisha," passed heedless on their way.

Hours passed. Peering from the shutters Plum Blossom perceived that it was night. A tang of brine struck her nostrils. A roar of breakers boomed in her ears. They were skirting the marge of a cliff, beneath which, her sails billowing in the breeze, rocked a high-prowed sampan.

Suddenly she heard a thud of galloping hoofs.

"Help!" she screamed, "in the name of the Emperor!" The yellow hawk's eyes of Kambaku stabbed at her through the dusk.

"Hold thy tongue, wanton," he hissed, prodding the bearers angrily with his spear.

An answering cry rang out from the pursuers, as they gained inch by inch upon their quarry.

In vain did the Fujiwara strive with threats and imprecations to goad his samurai to swifter flight. Yorimito with relentless wrath charged furiously upon them.

The rear-guard faltered under the sudden onslaught of the imperial swordsmen. With desperate fury they struck out terrific blows that ripped open bodies and crashed through helmet and skull to the very jaw.

Over severed heads and mangled bodies they leapt, their flashing blades cleaving lacquered mail, and biting deep into sinew and bone.

Decimated by pitiless slaughter the hirelings of the shogun gave way and paralysed with terror sought safety in flight.

Meanwhile, beset by a band of ruffians, the Emperor with a lightning stroke felled his foremost assailant and sent a second reeling to earth, when suddenly from behind him rang a woman's cries.

"Ware thee, Yorimito!"

Wheeling he parried a treacherous side slash from a stealthy samurai, and slicing the war-mask from his assailant's helmet revealed the blood-mad visage of Kambaku!

Like two lithe leopards they glared at each other, on the brink of the beetling cliff.

Blade clashed against blade in furious slash and wary feint, till, with a sudden stroke, Yorimito sent his opponent's sword flying from his hand.

Scorning to take advantage of an unarmed antagonist the Mikado sheathed his blade.

Bowing, as in surrender, Kambaku rushed upon him like a maddened bull.

Breast to breast they grappled, writhing back and forth on the slippery sod, each striving to thrust his opponent over the marge.



"Weary and spent the Mikado and the Geisha sought shelter from the driving snow"
(Harunobu)



“A servitor threw wide the fusuma. Tokiwa and Iki entered“
(Utamaro)

Kambaku gripped the Mikado's throat, tightening his merciless fingers as the other rained upon him murderous blows of his mailed fists. The relentless talons bit deeper and deeper into the tender flesh. Ever nearer the fearful brink they strained and struggled, each alternately uppermost.

Of a sudden Yorimito saw red. His eyeballs started from their sockets, and a bloody froth oozed from his lips.

A despairing wail: "Namu Amida, butsu," sounded faintly in his ears.

Summoning one supreme effort, Yorimito tore off the strangling fingers and thrust his adversary to the brink.

Digging his feet into a crevice Kambaku strove to rise. The rock crumbled. He tottered backward, dangling over the abyss. Thus he hung clutching the feet of the Mikado, striving to drag his enemy to death.

The sword of Yorimito flashed pitilessly above him.

"One word, ere thou slayest me!" besought the Fujiwara.

"Speak!" commanded the Emperor.

"Thy betrothed is a vile and accursed Eta!"

"Thou liest!" flashed Yorimito. The avenging blade descended. The clutching fingers relaxed. From ledge to ledge the body rebounded and splashed into the sea. Then all was silent save the lapping of the waves.

With a swift slash Yorimito severed the net, and clasped O Ume San to his heart.

"Grieve not, Beloved, 'twas but a fearsome dream. Thou shalt awake to joy!"

VI

DE PROFUNDIS

'Tis night! without, the tempest waileth,
Mingled with sleet swift falls the driving snow.
So cold am I my very blood congealeth,
I munch my smoked salt fish in utter woe!

I cough and sneeze, and, 'twixt the trembling wheezes,
I sip of sake dregs a potion cold,
I hug my bed and shiver with the breezes,
And heap upon me all the cloaks I hold.

But, as I shudder thus for hours together,
I strive to think of others still more poor,
Who, starving, shelterless in wind and weather,
Must beg their daily crust from door to door!
Unhappy ones, than me more sunk in sorrow,
Lost souls, how pass ye then your days?

(Voice of the Wind:)
"Wide are the earth and heavens, but for me narrow,
Bright are the sun and moon, but not for me!
From my bent frame, chilled to the very marrow,
A seaweed cloak falls tattered to my knee.

"For on the hearth no embers bright are burning.
Within the pot the spiders spin their lace.
And now the village head-man is returning—
To drive me homeless from this squalid place."

MANYOSHIU.

Weary and spent the Mikado and the Geisha sought shelter from a sudden tempest in a roadside hovel.

Huddled beneath a heap of rags upon the earthen floor lay an aged man.

“Come not near me,“ he muttered. “Touch me not for I am an accursed Eta.“[1]

[1] *The Etas were a caste whose occupations—necessitating the handling of dead bodies—caused them to be looked upon with horror and disdain.*

A paroxysm of coughing shook the sufferer. O Ume San ran to his side and drew the ragged coverlet about him.

“I had a daughter once,“ he said, his eyes lingering upon Plum Blossom, as she heaped the hearth with faggots. “When she was but a child I sold her to a teacher of Geisha, who swore never to reveal her parentage.“

“Didst give her no birthright token?“ asked O Ume San, placing a pot of rice upon the fire.

“Verily, a sure token, the mirror of her mother, a daughter of a samurai, who left home and kindred to share my shame. Soon she faded, a pale plum-blossom drooping neath the sun.“

“Father!“ cried O Ume San, clasping his trembling hands, “dost thou not know me?“

“Nay,“ protested the Eta, “never daughter of mine, so wondrous fair thou art!“

“Behold the token!“ she laughed, drawing from her girdle a silver mirror: “Thou didst give it me saying:

‘The mirror is the soul of a woman, even as the sword is the soul of a samurai. Behold thy mother‘s face.‘ Oft would I caress it, deeming the face I beheld therein my mother‘s.“

Tears coursed down the father‘s cheeks: “Thou art indeed my child!

"Ne'er shall summer skies
    Dry the ceaseless dew
From my aged eyes,
    Wept for loss of you.
Long I have known not
    Where thine home might be
Nor what pain thy lot.
    Thus I grieved for thee."[1]

[1]*Murasake no Shikibu*

Turning to the Emperor he cried: "She is thy love. Thou wilt not cast her forth!"

Yorimito fell upon his knees: "Naught save death shall part us, Father," he murmured reverently.

A wondrous smile lighted the careworn face. A terrific paroxysm rent the dying Eta. Piteously he strove to speak, but his lips refused utterance.

"Come back to me, Father!" cried Plum Blossom, then fell sobbing upon his breast.

"He bideth with Buddha," whispered Yorimito. "Behold the smile of ineffable peace!"

VII

Never the shrill cicada's cry
    Giveth a sign from flower or tree,
How soon, alas! 'twill surely die.
    Nor know we more our destiny.

BASHO.

One evening as the shadows deepened a frighted gazelle leaped through the shoji and fell trembling at the feet of O Ume San.

“Little Coward!“ she smiled, “what fearest thou? Naught of evil lurketh here.“

Through the shattered shutters she peeped forth into the forest where two burning coals gleamed in the dusk. A panther sprang from an overhanging bough and vanished in the night.

“This bodeth some hidden evil,“ she shuddered. “I will seek Yorimito, and he will laugh away my fears.“

Threading the bosky labyrinth leading to the imperial palace a shadow sprang from the thicket.

“Kambaku!“ she cried, “hath thy dæmon come back to earth?“

The Fujiwara smiled significantly. “I thought not to find thee here,“ he growled, gripping her by the throat. “Be silent, and thou shalt go free.“

“Unhand me then, and let me pass,“ she commanded imperiously. “Thou shalt answer to the Mikado for this assault upon his bride!“

Kambaku laughed. “His bride forsooth, “ he mocked.

“When the Emperor knoweth thy parentage he will cast thee off.“

The Geisha‘s eyes flashed triumph: “Yorimito knoweth all, yet am I his betrothed!“

“Hast thou so little love that thou wouldst smirch him with thy shame?“ demanded Kambaku.

“The Emperor is above all soilure of mine or thine,“ Plum Blossom murmured.

“Nay,“ retorted the Fujiwara, “thy very touch is pollution. Thou art an Eta!“

O Ume San fell quivering upon the ground and buried her face in her hands.

“Nor may he wed thee if he would,“ resumed Kambaku pitilessly, “save by relinquishing the throne and becoming an outcast. Shall he thus abase himself for thee?“

“Never,“ sobbed Plum Blossom, vanquished. “Better ‘twere that I should perish.“

“Listen, little Spring Flower,“ he pleaded, his voice assuming a gentler tone, “thy wilfulness hath wrought thy ruin. Hadst thou bent Yorimito to my will ye might have dwelt in happiness. But thou didst play against me, to win the Mikado. Little deemed I, when the game began, that thou wouldst win me too. Nathless hast thou triumphed, and I am thine, body and soul.“

“Sooner death!“ she flashed defiantly.

“Death for the Emperor,“ threatened Kambaku, “so thou yield not to my desire.“

“In the name of Buddha, spare him, good my Lord,“ implored Plum Blossom, “and upon the morrow shall I grant thee thy will,“ she temporized guilefully.

“This very night,“ cried Kambaku, his eyes aflame with desire.

“Grant me then a trifling boon,“ besought the Geisha.

“Whate‘er thou wilt, Little Blossom.“

“Give me, as troth plight, this bauble seal,“ she smiled with coy solicitude.

“Little Devil, I can deny thee nothing,“ he shrugged, placing the seal within her palm.

“Come when I quench the light,“ she whispered. “It shall be a sign that the Emperor sleepeth.“

“When he sleepeth,“ echoed the Fujiwara, then laughed sardonically: “This night, in sooth, shall he slumber deep!“

VIII

DUSK AT NARA

The pliant, wind-swept oleanders veer,
    Etching vague, velvet shadows on the sand;
And camphor trees, a venerable band,
    Stretch out gnarled, sinuous branches gaunt and sere.
Innumerable lanterns, tier on tier,
    With visored helmets, looming on each hand
In long defile, like silent sentries stand,
    While in the meadows browse the dappled deer.

Forgotten figures haunt these gardens cool;
    Contorted trunks of the wistaria fair
Seem feudal warriors in the ghostly gloom.
    The Fujiwara, stealing from his tomb
To slay the young Mikado, waiting there
    For the fair Geisha by the lotus pool.

Within the pavilion O Ume San knelt in prayer before her mother‘s mirror. She had heard the muttered threat and knew that no power of earth or heaven would let the Fujiwara from his revenge.

Dry-eyed and calm she rose, her resolution fixed. Never, for love of her, should the Emperor relinquish his high destiny.

Then wrapping the seal within a scroll she wrote thereon: “Beloved, I pay thee back my too great price.

“As the swift stream is rent in twain
    By boulders in its flow,

Yet, speeding on, unites again;
So may our souls though parted now
Unite in death anew."

Placing the missive upon the tokonoma she took from an armour-chest a samurai's helmet and cloak.

Tiring herself therein she stood before the lamp, throwing her shadow upon the translucent shoji, well knowing that Kambaku would mistake it for the Emperor.

After a moment she extinguished the light, and, creeping beneath her quilt, prayed for the happiness of her lord.

Ghostly moonbeams pencilled upon the floor frail fluttering clusters of wistaria. Suddenly the silver luminance was shrouded by a creeping shadow.

Plum Blossom shrank deeper within the covering, her heart scarce beating.

Little by little the shadow slowly lengthened. She heard a stealthy tread upon the floor. The loosened planks uttered shrill creaks like cries of a wounded bird. Softly, very softly, the shoji were slipped aside.

A sudden flash as of lightning. Then all was night. No more she knew of earthly pain or bliss of mortal love. Plum Blossom's butterfly spirit had fluttered upward through the night.

Kambaku lifted the severed head and leered upon its blood-bespattered loveliness, his eyes wide with horror.

As he glared thus, gibbering impotently, a shout rang through the night. He wheeled abruptly about, then reeled to earth, his heart transfixed by the sword of the Emperor.

Oft in the misty spring
The vapours roll o'er Mount Mikasa's crest
While, pausing not to rest,
The birds each morn with plaintive note do sing.
Like to the mists of spring
My heart is rent; for, like the song of birds,
Still all unanswered ring
The tender accents of my passionate words.

I call her every day
Till daylight fades away;
I call her every night
Till dawn restores the light;
But my fond prayers are all too weak to bring
My darling back to sight.[1]

[1] *Translated from Akahito (in The Myriad Leaves) by Professor Basil Hall Chamberlain.*

CHAPTER VI

THE CLASHING OF THE CLANS

PRELUDE

THE MINAMOTO CUBS

HER husband dead, a sheaf of spears in his breast, the roof falling behind her, Lady Tokiwa and her little sons fled from the flaming Minamoto Castle.

With sublime audacity, she sought refuge in the palace of her arch enemy, the Taira tyrant Kiyomori.

In all Nippon there was but one who did not tremble before the cruel daimio, his dauntless mother, Iki.

So, when Tokiwa implored her to intercede with Kiyomori in behalf of her fatherless children, Iki peered through her time-dimmed eyes into the faces of the Minamoto princelings: Yoritomo, sullen and defiant, Yoshitsune, laughing and cuddling her withered bosom.

“Jizo bless thee, little Elf,“ she cried. “Thou hast the very countenance of my lost babe. Rise Lady Tokiwa, I will conduct thee to my son.“

All Kyoto rang with the Taira victory. Kiyomori and his exulting retainers were carousing in the high-roofed banquet-hall. His heart was hot with sake. Lust of battle had yielded to lust of flesh. He had apportioned the precious Minamoto loot among his trusted samurai, and was now tasting with delight the cup of their fulsome flattery. Drunk with wine and glory, he surveyed the gods, the world, and himself with self-complacent pride.

A servitor threw wide the fusuma. Tokiwa and lid entered. The young matron prostrated herself timorously before the mazed daimio, the aged mother seating herself fearlessly at his side.

“Is she not surpassing fair?“ Iki whispered.

“By Benten,“ cried Kiyomori, “tis the peerless princess of the Minamoto. They spake sooth who named thee most beauteous flower of Yamato.“

Tokiwa smiled pitifully: “I come, most august and gracious Lord, to beseech a priceless boon.“

“What wouldst thou seek?“ demanded the tyrant as the trembling lips of Tokiwa denied her speech.

“That, in thine infinite mercy,“ besought Tokiwa, great tears welling to her eyes, “thou wouldst spare my fatherless children.“

“Thy Minamoto cubs? Never,“ he thundered. “Soon will they grow to panthers, and rend the hand that feeds them.“

“Mark her well, my son,“ insinuated Iki. “Is she not worth the venture?“

Kiyomori‘s gaze drank the shrinking figure from tiara to sandal, gloating upon her gently rounded curves.

“Bring thy brats,“ he grunted, clicking his fan.

Laughing and unaffrighted, the children romped in, Yoshitsune clambering upon the knee of Mother Iki, rummaging her robes in quest of sweetmeats, Yoritomo planting himself sturdily before the tyrant, scornful and unabashed.

Tokiwa bade him bow obeisance, but he refused, insolently thrusting out his tongue.

Kiyomori grinned: "Fierce little panthers! Minamoto to the bone!"

"Nay, my son, he is like to thee," cried his mother. "Even so thou didst honour thine elders when a child."

"And wouldst thou rear such another cub, fond, long-suffering dam?" demanded the daimio jestingly.

"Yea, more than one," she smiled, "grant me both, that I may pare their baby claws."

Kiyomori laughed, "Thou shalt have thy will, little Mother," he muttered grudgingly.

Tokiwa crept to the tyrant's dais and clasped his feet, weeping for joy.

I
HOW A MINAMOTO BEFRIENDED A TAIRA

Kwannon

Beneath far-jutting eaves, whose sword-like sweep
  Slashes the verdant lacquer of the pine,
A forest of vast figures fill a shrine,
  Portraying one in contemplation deep,
Whose weary lids know neither death nor sleep.
  Tier upon tier the golden idols shine,
Three thousand, thousand-handed, loom in line,
  And pitying peer on all who pray and weep.

Goddess of Mercy, bountiful and kind,
  Who givest succour to the sore opprest,
Within thy shrine, where, muttering their prayer,
  Old bonzes bow, like Buddhas bent and blind,
Grant me at last the benison of rest,
  Thy blest Nirvana and an end of care!

A youthful samurai knelt in the temple‘s golden gloom intoning his mournful prayer. Suddenly he rose and beat his breast: “Not rest or peace for such as I,“ he cried despairingly. “Thou knowest, merciful Kwannon, these are not the boons I fain would seek.“

“The gifts of the Goddess are of her own choosing,“ spake a gentle voice at his elbow. “Yet shouldst thou entreat her with whole-souled faith, she will bestow upon thee thy heart‘s desire.“

Turning swiftly, the samurai beheld a smiling maiden, who extended to him a silken scrip and a lacquered begging-bowl.

“August and honourable Lord,“ she entreated, “pray make thy benevolent offering, and thrust thy hand into the bag of Fortune.“

“Surely thou art no priestess, but the daughter of Kwannon,“ spoke the samurai noting the delicate, aristocratic, oval face, from under whose high-arched brows wistful eyes met his own with the trustfulness of a young child.

“The Imperial Maids-of-Honour assist the priestesses upon this day of days,“ she smiled.

Dropping a silver coin in the bowl, the samurai slipped his hand within the scrip, fumbling among a mass of tiny amulets. His brow clouded with disappointment as he drew forth a little brazen sword.

“A life of strife is allotted thee,“ she murmured, her eyes aflood with laughter. “Is this not thy heart‘s desire?“

The youth stood wonder-struck by the sudden sympathy revealed to him in the maiden‘s naïve delight.

“Already is that mine, fair votaress, but I would fain have greater guerdon,“ ventured the enraptured samurai.

"The bounty of Kwannon is beyond measure," rejoined the maiden. "'Tis permitted the benevolent donor to entreat her grace anew."

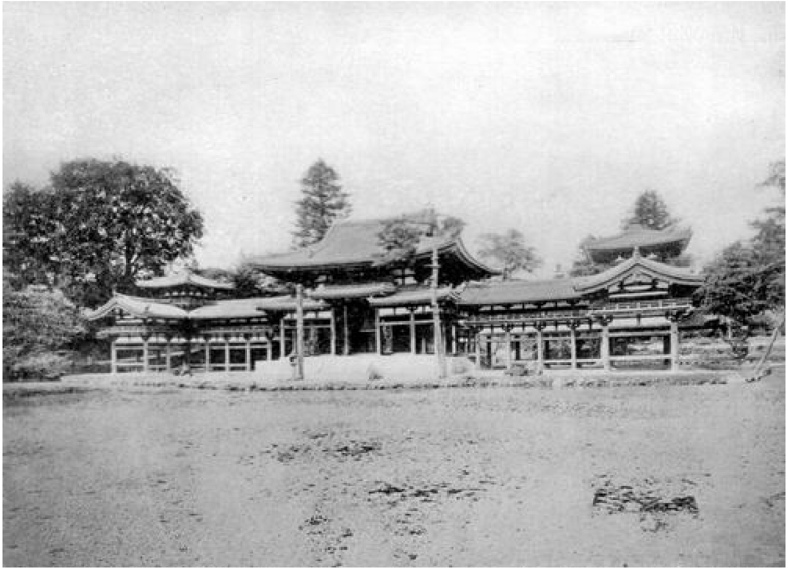
"Request is proffered that the noble lady will select the gift which the Goddess granteth me."

The charms in the scrip tinkled musically as her fingers stirred them. A smile of mingled mischief and tenderness deepened her dimples as she laid in his palm a tiny golden heart.

"The gods have granted a happy omen," laughed the delighted youth," since it comes from thy hand to mine."



"The highwayman with a dexterous sweep of his halberd held her captive"
(Hokusai)



Pavilion of the Phoenix, Summer Palace of Yorimasa, Uji
"In refinement of proportion and purity of style unsurpassed in all Japan"
From "Japanese Temples and their Treasures"

Her ebon lashes swept her flushed cheeks, and with a little inclination of her delicate head the maiden glided away. She passed from group to group, jingling her coins and amulets, chanting sweetly the whiles: "Gifts, gifts of Kwannon; to the benevolent the thousand-handed Goddess grant eth his heart's desire."

The youth sped after his fleeting lady, drawn by a lodestone uncomprehended but irresistible, and paused, his progress suddenly stemmed by the suite of the Regent, Taira Kiyomori.

A score of years have passed since, as a lad, Yoshitsune stood in the despotic presence and gazed unabashed into the tyrant's relentless face. Little reeks Kiyomori that "the Minamoto cubs" he caged within fortress and monastery, grown to lithe young panthers, have burst their bonds and even now are crouching for the spring.

“Thou seest, my son,“ spake Kiyomori exultingly, “not a single Minamoto dareth show his crest!“

Munemori pointed to the smiling seller of amulets:

“Asagao, Morning Glory, fairest flower of the Minamoto,“ he protested courteously.

“Daughter of dotard Yorimasa,“ sneered the tyrant, “a toothless cur, that may no longer bite!“

“Yet can the old dog snarl,“ laughed Munemori, “for when I besought the hand of his daughter, methought he would have rent me limb from limb.“

“Shall a Taira abase himself to *beseech* a Minamoto?“

thundered Kiyomori. “An the maid pleaseth thee, take her, forsooth!“

Yoshitsune gripped his sword, then, mastering himself, resolved at all hazards to shield his fair votaress from her hidden peril. He plunged into the seething throng, seeking ever the Flower of the Minamoto. But Morning Glory, in her gilded norimon, had quitted the temple-court.

The bearers had plodded but a little space when Munemori, riding in hot haste, overtook and forced his escort upon the maiden.

“The proffered service of the Taira lord is not desired,“ replied Morning Glory courteously

“Nay, beauteous lady,“ laughed the insistent Munemori, “without thy leave still shall I guard thee on thy way.“

With a sudden clash Asagao closed the shutters.

Unabashed, Munemori pursued the one-sided intercourse, well knowing, howsoe'er ill-content the maid

might be, she had no choice but to listen.

"Flower of my heart," he cried, "I have long time sought thee of thine august father. Why doth he still deny my suit? Such an alliance would slay the hatred of our rival clans."

"The hatred of a Minamoto is deathless," rejoined Morning Glory. "Beware to anger me with thine unwelcome importunities, else thy folly bring thee evil fate."

"Deathless too," echoed Munemori, "is the love of a Taira. Know, my sweet enemy, that no hatred, not even thine own, shall stay me from my will. Entreat thy father to grant my suit else, Body of Kwannon, I shall take thee without his consent or thine!"

As he spake, a highwayman sprang from covert, and, with lowered halberd, commanded them to halt.

"Who art thou?" demanded Munemori, "who thus waylayeth peaceful citizens?"

"I am Benkei, a monk of Hiei-zan," cried the burly bonze. Wherewith the bandit laid about him so lustily that he beat the sword from Munemori's hand, slashing his charger in such grievous wise that it threw its rider heavily to the ground.

Morning Glory leaped from her litter, trusting to save herself in flight. But the highwayman with a dexterous sweep of his halberd held her captive within its scythe-like curve.

Sudden, from out the darkness, ran a youthful samurai. Grasping the bandit in a grip of steel, with relentless might he bent his wrist slowly backward till the halberd fell clanging upon the stones.

As the cut-throat stooped to regain his weapon, with a crashing blow the unknown samurai struck him suddenly to earth.

The vanquished ruffian cringed before his triumphant adversary: “Spare me, most valiant lord,“ he pleaded. “Suffer me to become the henchman of my conqueror.“

“My henchman!“ echoed the other. “Never! I make not war on maids nor rob defenceless knights.“

“Softly, august master,“ fawned the contrite highwayman, “I plotted no scathe for this fine gallant and his lovesome lady. I sought but his sword. A vow have I sworn to gain a thousand blades wherewith to arm the merry monks of Yoshitsune against the vile Taira.“

Joyously laughed the knight. “I am Yoshitsune,“ he declared, “and since there be need of valiant blades, I accept thy proffered fealty.“

Turning to Morning Glory, he bespake her full courteously: “Lady of the understanding heart, suffer thine unworthy servitor to guard thee on thy way.“

Shyly yet eagerly the maid made answer: “Willingly doth the daughter of Yorimasa accept the proffered service of the valiant Minamoto; but first let us succour this misfortunate knight.“

Yoshitsune devoured his enemy with hungering eyes. “Little love,“ he said, “wouldst thou bear this Taira didst thou know his secret soul?“

“Nay,“ protested Asagao earnestly, “I love thy foeman not. Belike ye may meet one day in battle; how would I pray that thou shouldst conquer.“

Yoshitsune smiled:

> The Morning Glory‘s fragile tendrils twine
>   Around the rope with such bewitching spell

I cannot bear to break the tender vine;
But draw my water from my neighbor's well.

"Benkei," he commanded, "bring water, wherewith to revive this wounded knight."

The henchman ran to the river, filled his helmet, and, returning, poured it over the head of the bemused Munemori, who rubbed his astonished eyes and groped dazedly for his sword.

Placing the wounded man's arm about his shoulder, Yoshitsune spake reassuringly: "Fear not, Brother, we would but take thee to thy dwelling." Then to the erstwhile highwayman: "Lend a hand, Benkei," he cried, "tis for the honour of the Minamoto!"

Gently he bestowed the maiden in her gilded norimon, whispering the whiles, "Lady of the understanding heart, 'tis for thy sake I have done this deed! Tell me, I pray, that I may greet again thy wondrous smile."

Asagao abased her mist-dimmed eyes: "When the first morning glory opens," she murmured timidly, "in the temple garden."

"Then, Flower of the Dawn, will I keep the tryst," smiled Yoshitsune, his heart singing with delight:

"If thou shouldst wish to meet me, Dear,
We two, alone, again,
Come to the temple tori near,
Or sunbeam, storm or rain;
And if the idlers scoff or sneer,
Discreetly to them say:
Upon the passing throng to peer
Thou wendest thus thy way.

If thou shouldst wish to meet me, Dear,
Alone, but thou and I,

Hide ‘neath the murmurous pine boughs here,
    Till I to thee draw nigh,
Bide in the sheltering bamboo patch,
    If any folk ask why,
Say that thou earnest there to catch
    A burnished butterfly.“
 FLOWER DANCE, BINGO PROVINCE.

II
HOW A MINAMOTO CAME TO HIS TRYST AND ENCOUNTERED WHOM HE WOULD NOT AND THEREAFTER FARED BETTER THAN HE HOPED.

At the unfolding of the first white convolvulus Yoshitsune hastened to the temple tori. Vainly questing Morning Glory he wandered through the deserted garden to the vast and lofty temple.

Within its interminable verandah he fell upon a band of Taira samurai absorbed in a contest of archery. They had set their target at the very end, emulating ‘ne another in vain attempts to reach the goal.

Munemori clapped Yoshitsune upon the shoulder.

“Take my bow, Comrade,“ he exclaimed, “and try thy fortune!“

“Comrade of thine am I not,“ laughed Yoshitsune, “nor may I avail myself of thy courtesy since graver matters await me.“

“Thy business shall wait forsooth, an thou wouldst not become target for our shafts.“

Loth to provoke a quarrel, Yoshitsune drew bow. Over-confident in his skill, he neglected to take account of the wind. His arrow swerved to the side and buried itself in a beam.

With a shrug he yielded the bow to Munemori. Tossing into air a handful of feathers the Taira noted the trend of the breeze; then stretching the great bow with all his strength he sent a shaft far beyond his antagonist.

A ringing cry from the bystanders acclaimed the shot. “Try again, Friend,“ smiled Munemori complacently. Parting his legs for a sturdier stance, Yoshitsune drew the great Kwanto bow to its utmost stretch. An arrow trembled in the heart of the target.

“A master-shot!“ cried the Taira bowmen.

Aflame with envy, Munemori muttered: “Tis wondrous chance, if indeed it be not magic. Who art thou, stranger?“ he demanded. “Surely ore now have I beheld thine evil-favoured visage.“

Yoshitsune smiled significantly: “A man without home or name,“ he rejoined, hastening into the temple. The Taira glared lowering after, probing his memory.

Of a sudden he struck his thigh.

“Clansmen,“ he stormed, “tis the Minamoto panther who hath burst his cage! Guards, bolt the doors, that he may not escape!“

Little reeked the eager youth the trap into which he had fallen. But Morning Glory, waiting within the temple, had heard.

“Hide, dear my Lord,“ she implored, “else will they surely slay thee!“

“Fear not, loved Blossom,“ he replied reassuringly. “None may draw blade within this holy place.“

“Nay,“ she protested, “Munemori stayeth not for Gods or men! Thou art unarmed. The Taira will drag thee forth to torture.“

Against his will, Asagao silently led him to a curtained alcove behind the golden image of Kwannon.

"Tis the shrine of the Mikado," she whispered. "None may enter here on pain of death."

"Yet thou dost dare?" he marvelled.

"Love dareth even death!" she smiled triumphantly.

Sudden shouts and the tramp of iron feet! "Death to the Minamoto!" roared the thunderous voice of Munemori. "Seize and strip him, then cast him in the panther's pit. We shall see with what love his kindred caress him!"

The temple walls re-echoed as the Taira troop rushed in. Back and forth they quested through the endless ranks of golden idols, closing slowly in upon their prey.

As Munemori grasped the glittering veil of the Goddess, an imperious voice stayed his profane hand.

"Bow down, Sacrilegious One," commanded Kwannon. "Sheathe thy sword lest I destroy thee utterly!"

The great idol slowly revolved, her myriad arms raised in wrathful menace. Munemori fell back abashed.

Within the shrine a trap-door opened, leading to a secret, subterranean passage. The youth and the maiden descended, the Goddess turned, wrapped her gleaming robes about her, and the sword of Munemori shivered in fragments against the bright impenetrable folds!

Through many and tortuous windings they hastened till they came to a grated doorway. Recognizing Asagao, a sentry led them up a narrow stairway out into a cloistered court. To his astonishment,

Yoshitsune saw before him the palace of the Emperor, whose guard Yorimasa commanded.

Circling the cloister, Asagao conducted the youth to her father's dwelling.

The daimio salaamed with sibilant indrawings of breath: "August Highness, dauntless chieftain of our clan," he greeted, "deign to honour with thy presence my humble abode."

"My Daughter, it is thy privilege to offer refreshment to our princely guest."

Morning Glory silently glided from the apartment. The eyes of the aged warrior lighted with a sudden flame:

"Time is," he exclaimed, "that we raise the white standard of the Minamoto and rend in tatters the red Taira banner. For this have I long plotted in secret; now is the hour to strike!"

"In truth," returned Yoshitsune, "even now my brother Yoritomo doth raise an army in the east. With the fighting monks of Hiei-zan will I go to join him."

"My Lord," interposed Yorimasa, "the Minamoto shall set up a Heaven-descended Emperor, in whose veins runs no taint of the Taira blood."

The voice of Yoshitsune vibrated with deep emotion. "When the last Taira lieth in his bloody shroud," he entreated, "wilt thou grant me to wife thy gentle white-souled daughter?"

Yorimasa recoiled as though stabbed to the heart. "highness," he stammered, "my life is thine, to be poured out at thy bidding; but my daughter is already given to another!"

The youth swore a mighty oath. The earth reeled suddenly beneath him. Had Morning Glory, the soul of truth, made a mock of his affection? In the twinkling of an eye his faith reasserted itself.

"To whom hast thou pledged Asagao?" he demanded eagerly.

"To thine enemy and mine, Taira Munemori," was the curt answer.

Yoshitsune sprang to his feet. "Munemori!" he cried. "Madman, wherefore hast thou done this deed?"

Yorimasa raised his hand in mute deprecation:

"The truth shall be known," he said simply. "This very day did Taira no Kiyomori demand the hand of Asagao for his son—"

"Thou didst not consent," the youth asserted.

"Rather would I doom her to death," affirmed the heroic daimio.

"But Kiyomori told me our children had plighted their troth beneath the eternal stars!"

The eyes of Yoshitsune grew dark with wrath:

"Amida Butsu!" he murmured beneath his breath.

"Only last night when Munemori rescued my daughter from bandits."

"Tis sooth," laughed Yoshitsune, "save that thou hast sadly misnamed the actors in this little comedy. 'Twas not to the Taira that Asagao plighted troth."

"I had it from her very lips," insisted Yorimasa.

The youth smiled incredulously.

"Last night," resumed the father, "a boding dream oppressed me. I sought my daughter, fearing lest some dread sorrow had befallen. The moonbeams fluttered upon her frail, white figure, a fleeting smile dimpled her peach-tinted cheek. Wistfully she murmured: 'Prince of my dreams, I love thee! In the Temple of Kwannon have I given thee my heart!' Forgive her, Yoshitsune, she is very young!"

"Forgive her!" cried the blissful youth, "in sooth I shall, since she hath given her heart to me!"

Yorimasa's aged eyes lighted with a joyous smile. He clicked his fan sharply and Morning Glory entered bearing upon a vermilion lacquered tray the ceremonial tea.

She had donned a robe of mist-grey crepe, girded by an orchid-tinted obi. In the spread wings of her raven hair glittered golden dragonflies.

"My daughter," smiled Yorimasa complacently, "the august prince, Minamoto no Yoshitsune honours our unworthy house by demanding thee in wedlock."

Asagao prostrated herself till her white brow touched the floor: "The will of my father is the delight of his child," she answered dutifully.

Yoshitsune clasped her to his heart: "Worshipped One, through a thousand existences shall my love for thee endure," he murmured fervently:

"The way a river runneth to the sea,
 The way an eagle wingeth through the day,
The way my passion floweth, Love, to thee!
 These changeless are and ne' er shall know decay!"[1]

[1]*Japanese folk-song.*

III

THE BATTLE OF THE FIREFLIES: AND HOW "A TOOTHLESS DOG" DID BITE

It was night; great, white mourning-lanterns gleamed upon the Taira gate. The tyrant, Kiyomori, had journeyed to the Eternal Land.

"Perform no funeral rites," he had commanded. "Seize Minamoto no Yoritomo, behead him, and hang his skull before my tomb."

The death of the masterful Kiyomori was the signal for the long-smouldering Minamoto rebellion, which suddenly burst forth and swept the country like a devouring flame.

Rallying a horde of clansmen, ronins and fighting-monks, Yoritomo kindled the fires by marching against Kyoto.

Taira Munemori, with an army of twenty thousand samurai, set forth to meet him.

Yorimasa with a paltry three hundred waited at the Uji River. As his warriors were sawing asunder the last remaining planks of the bridge, a sudden clatter of hoofs broke the stillness of the night!

"'Tis Yoshitsune!" cried Asagao triumphantly. "Behold his snowy banner flashing in the dusk."

Yorimasa raised his hands in mute despair! "Alas, my child, he cannot cross! The bridge no longer will bear his weight!"

Heedless of her father's warning Morning Glory mounted the trembling timbers. A plank splashed into the stream as she glided swiftly across.

"If I but had a lantern wherewith to warn him," mused the maiden longingly.

The meadow glimmered with the light of a myriad glow-worms. Asagao smiled with sudden delight. Descending to the river she gathered the fireflies by scores, and, prisoning them in her veil, made a gleaming torch.

Pursued by a squadron of Taira horsemen, Yoshitsune with a score of samurai galloped toward the bridge.

Suddenly Morning Glory flashed her lantern.

“Halt, Yoshitsune!“ she screamed. “The bridge is sawn asunder!“

Throwing his steed back upon its haunches, Yoshitsune lifted her to the saddle. A shower of arrows from the Taira bowmen whistled around them as he spurred into the stream.

Her arms clasped tightly about his shoulders, Morning Glory clung to her knight as, swimming steadily, the great charger safely bore them through the seething torrent.

Even as they gained the bank their pursuers neared the fatal bridge. Unwitting the trap which lay before them, the Taira troop rode recklessly onward. When the foremost horseman reached the middle span the planks gave way, hurling steeds and riders, amid a crash of splintered timbers to sudden death.

White with terror, Morning Glory sank swooning upon the ground. Yoshitsune raised her gently.

“Courage, Love,“ he cried. “Ride with all speed to Yoritomo. Spare neither spur nor lash!“

“Nay, I am not affrighted,“ she smiled, tossing her head resolutely. “A Minamoto feareth not the hour of battle!“

“Await me then in thy father‘s palace. Should the Taira cross the threshold, thou wilt know I am no more.“

“At that moment will I go to join thee,“ Asagao flashed.

“We shall meet here or in a happier life,“ Yoshitsune smiled, and turned to face the foe.

Munemori led his twenty thousand samurai into the ford. A tempest of shafts from Yorimasa‘s valiant bowmen greeted the Taira as they reached midstream. But how could a few score archers prevail against such overwhelming odds! On they came, creeping up the bank like an endless swarm of ants, their lacquered harness gleaming blue in the moonlight.

Sitting his steed like a brazen statue, waited Yoshitsune. Against his breast-plate a shower of shafts glanced and splintered. Still he waited until the foremost Taira were but a lance‘s length away. Then, with a sudden cry, he spurred furiously upon them.

Desperately fought I lie Minamoto but in vain, for the Taira surged upon them relentless, numberless, and invincible.

Yoshitsune shivered his sword upon the shield of Munemori, who rose in his stirrups, his blade about to fall.

Springing suddenly between, Yorimasa cried: “Out upon thee, caitiff, to strike a defenceless foe!“

The great blade fell, cleaving the casque in twain.

Catching him in his arms, Yoshitsune bore the stricken general from the field. But when he looked for Munemori, no trace of the Taira could he find.

Yorimasa soon revived under the gentle ministrations of Morning Glory. “Time enough for women‘s work,“ he cried impatiently. “Watch!“

The trembling girl crouched upon the balcony. Affrighted by the clash of arms, a swarm of fireflies rose from the river bank, soaring upon the night like sparks from a mighty conflagration.

The souls of the Minamoto!" cried Asagao despairingly. "Father, we are lost!"

Hearing no response, she ran into the chamber.

Upon the white matting lay Yorimasa weltering in a pool of blood. Preferring death to surrender the conquered chieftain had committed seppuku.

With a thunderous crash the palace gate fell. Snatching an axe from an assailant, Yoshitsune rushed into the archway. His blows rained like a flail upon a threshing-floor. Gathering about him, his warriors formed a rampart, from which the Taira drew back discomfited.

"Munemori!" he shouted, "darest thou not leap this little barrier?"

"All in good time," returned the Taira, his face contorted with an ugly leer: "Archers, clear the way of yonder wildcat!"

A hundred arrows whistled through the archway. Yoshitsune fell, transfixed by a dozen shafts.

A heart-rending wail arose above the tumult. Running to her lover's side, Morning Glory grasped his sword, bent on self-destruction.

Munemori roughly unclenched her trembling fingers. "Thou wouldst slay thyself, sweet Blossom," he laughed, crushing her in his cruel embrace, "but by the Gods, thou art too late!"

Asagao sank from him in loathing and fell swooning upon her father's breast.

IV

THE FLIGHT OF THE TAIRA

> "A firefly in a prison pent,
> Ne'er more to flame upon the moor."

Taken captive by the Taira, Morning Glory lay in delirium, bereft of her dauntless lord.

"My Worshipped One, I did vow to join thee in the Meido. Alas!" she wailed, "I have not kept my tryst."

But Yoshitsune still lived. Raised from the dead by his faithful Benkei, he gathered a mighty army and descended anew upon his foes with fierce and bloody onslaught.

Vainly fighting a losing cause the Taira withdrew within the mighty fortress of Kobe.

Through a twelve-months' siege the Minamoto gripped the struggling city in an ever-tightening grasp.

Landward, cyclopean walls engirdled the city on all sides save one, where towered a sheer, impregnable cliff. Crouched thereon the Minamoto panthers glared upon their prey ready to spring; but still Yoshitsune delayed the death-stroke.

Morning Glory stood upon the ramparts with the Child Emperor flying a kite. Her eyes scanned anxiously the cliff where she discerned a white banner waving amid the Minamoto ranks.

"'Tis Yoshitsune," she cried, her heart beating with delight "he hath recognized my signal!"

Her little plan had succeeded, Yoshitsune had guessed the riddle of the morning-glory kite.

Even as she spake, an arrow whistled above her head and quivered in the heart of the flower.

“Alas! he would slay me!“ she wailed.

“Look!“ cried little Antoku, drawing in the cord and displaying a barbless shaft, about which was wrapped a scroll. “Someone hath sent me a letter!“

Morning Glory untwined the missive: “Tis mine, dear child,“ she smiled, and hid it in her bosom.

In the solitude of her chamber she read:

> What is this life! A seed-plume idly blown
>   By turns this way and that by vagrant wind,
> Wafted we know not why by instincts blind,
>   Unwitting whence we came or whither flown:
> But, like the seed unto the tempest sown,
>   That springs to fruitage ‘neath the sunbeams kind,
> My soul doth seek unceasingly to find
>   In thy dear smile the Sun of Life unknown.
>
> So, like the morning-glory, consciousless of aught
>   Of earth‘s vast mystery of ceaseless pain,
> Bloom thou in beauty, or in sun or rain;
>   Fear not, nor take a solitary thought,
> Of morrows doomful, yesterday‘s annoy;
>   Bloom for the day in unremitting joy!

Smiling between her tears, Asagao wrote an answering stanza, and pasting the poem over the rent, repaired the broken kite, fraying meanwhile several strands of the cord.

Scarcely had little Antoku given it to the wind when the threads parted, the kite soared high in air, fell, and was caught in the branches of a pine at the summit of the cliff.

"Shouting to his comrades: 'Where a stag can go there can a man!'"



"Yoshitsune spurred his steed over the precipice."
(Hokusai)

Yoshitsune climbed and, discovering the missive, read:

The morning-glory holds for one brief day
    A soul as full and free from idle fears,
As that of some great fir, born to decay
    Though it may flourish for a thousand years!

MATSUNAGA.



"A ringing cry rose from a thousand throats as the great ships grappled"
(Kunitsuna)

At sunset came an arrow winging a burning message:

"If thou lovest me, Worshipped One, fail not for thy life to wait this night at the Water-Gate. With the rising of the moon will the Minamoto panther spring!"

Morning Glory doubted not that her lover would keep his tryst. Well she knew ere dawn not a living soul would be left in the palace. In fancy she heard the roar of the onslaught, crashing of doors, shrieks of women, and through it all one shrill small voice pitifully lisping her name. No quarter would be granted to the Taira infant, grandson of the hated Kiyomori.

Silently she tiptoed through dim corridors to little Antoku's chamber. Wrapping the sleeping child in a futon she sped to the Water-Gate.

A narrow river flowed to the harbour, where the Taira fleet lay at anchor, ready for instant flight. Above the cliff a silver moon was rising.

Through the midnight hush she heard a light rustle as of wind-swept branches, at first scarcely audible, then rising little by little to the crash of a mighty avalanche!

With a picked band of warriors Yoshitsune waited on the summit of the cliff. At the rising of the moon he commanded the onslaught.

The Minamoto warriors drew back aghast at the brink of the deep abyss.

Suddenly a startled stag sprang from covert and bounded down the cliff.

Shouting to his comrades: "Where a stag can go there can a man!" Yoshitsune spurred his steed over the precipice.

Down plunged the powerful charger, through bramble and bracken, sliding, stumbling, clambering, amid an avalanche of crumbling stone, down the bed of a dried torrent. On he galloped, frightening sea-fowl from their airy nests, crushing small furry things beneath his heavy hoofs, hurtling downward like a meteor from the sky. But ever, as he neared the silent, sleeping city, a great exultation swelled his heart. He rode to the rescue of his beloved!

Close behind charged his devoted samurai crouching over the necks of their steeds. Rearing, rolling, and diving, down the beetling cliff, a tempest of floundering horses and mailed men. Into the stream they plunged, led by Yoshitsune, swimming the tide to the very steps of the Water-Gate.

Through dark deserted streets swept the samurai, waking the doomed inhabitants to sudden massacre. Shrieks of terror rose from the Taira: "To the ships!" they cried. "To the ships! The Minamoto are upon us!"

Beneath a flaring cresset stood Morning Glory, holding little Antoku in her arms. Yoshitsune sprang to her side and strained her to his heart.

So absorbed were they in their supreme felicity that they scarcely heard the deep bourdon which, like great organ chords, swelled through the teeming streets, as the flood of fugitives surged in mad stampede to the harbour.

Nor did they note that, from the fighting junk anchored in the roadstead, a sampan was sculling silently toward them.

With a sudden shriek Morning Glory was dragged over the thwarts, pinioned by the powerful hands of Munemori.

Instantly Yoshitsune sprang into the sampan, slashing his way to the Taira, who cowered behind the body of Asagao.

But as he stood, fearful to strike lest the blow might fall upon his loved one, the boatmen beat him heavily over the head with their oars and flung him into the sea.

The sampan bounded for the ship; but, hurriedly as the Taira seamen weighed anchor and hoisted sail, the Minamoto samurai were at the shore to bid them devil's speed. Their arrows rained upon the deck like hail upon a temple roof.

Morning Glory stood at the stern stretching her arms in mute appeal.

Mounting his steed, Yoshitsune rode into the water crying: "Leap, Asagao! To life and safety, Light of my very soul!"

Vainly the maiden strove to free herself. Munemori, laughing derisively, held her fast.

The white sails bellied and like a living creature the great ship took the sea.

V
THE VENGEANCE OF THE MINAMOTO

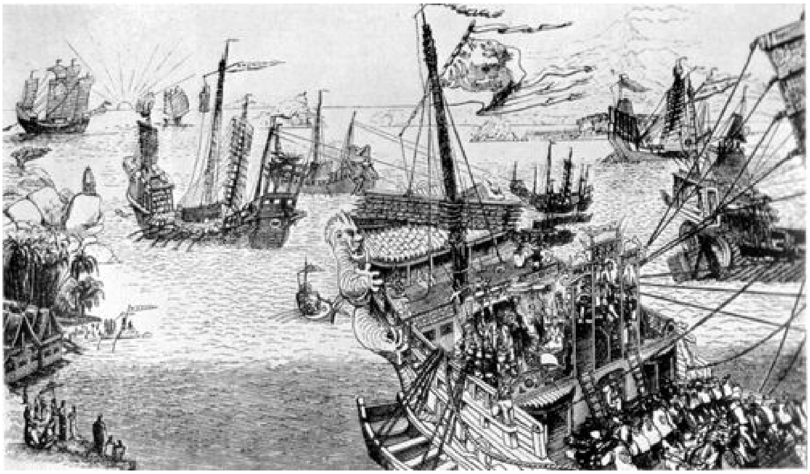
O ruthless, wind-tossed wave,
Upon Tsushima's strands,
How many ghosts of warriors brave
Lie shrouded in thy sands!
IZAYOI NO KI.

Through the tortuous channels of the Inland Sea fled the affrighted Taira. From port to port they scurried, the Minamoto pursuing relentlessly, "as the hawk urges the pheasants when the moors arc burnt and no cover is left."



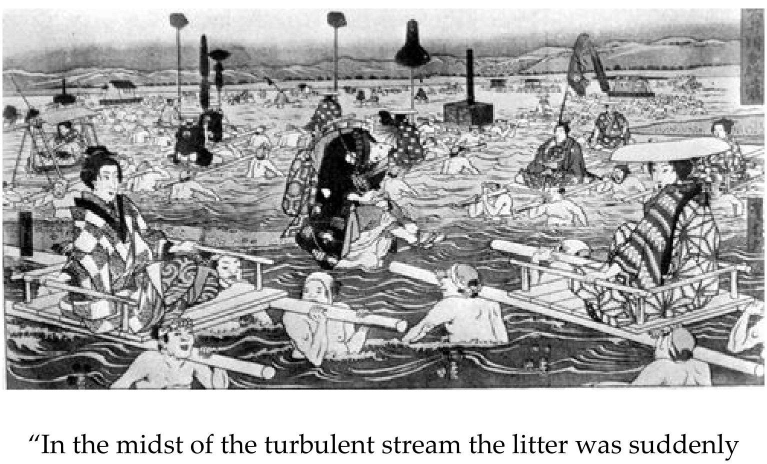
“Munemori evaded the stroke and running to the bulwarks plunged into the sea“
(Kuniyoshi)

"So there he sent a mighty fleet
With horse and foot and arms replete,



To scourge the land with famine, sword and flame"

The ford of the Ujigawa



"In the midst of the turbulent stream the litter was suddenly overturned"

In the narrow strait of Dan-no-ura they turned and faced their foes. But to their consternation their ally the Governor of Kyushu ran up

the white flag, reinforcing the Minamoto to eight hundred ships and leaving but two hundred to the doomed Taira.

Yoshitsune stood on the bow heartening his clansmen. “Banish all fear,“ he cried. “Death cometh soon or late. Let us live this day so that future ages may acclaim our deeds!“

The air was thick with a tempest of whirling shafts, a ringing cry rose from a thousand throats as the great ships grappled. Their blades between their teeth the Minamoto leaped upon the Taira flagship. Smiling, but pitiless, swinging his two-handed sword like a gleaming scythe, as it reaped on every hand its harvest of sudden death, came Yoshitsune.

Behind a mast crouched Munemori, till his adversary passed, when he sprang suddenly upon him; and the Taira‘s blade glanced from the Minamoto‘s shoulder.

Yoshitsune whirled abruptly about and steel clashed against steel as the two slipped and staggered upon tin‘ gory deck.

With a quick spring Munemori dashed beneath his adversary‘s guard and thrust deep into the Minamoto‘s side. But Yoshitsune with a thunderous slash severed the Taira‘s helmet and the raven hair dripped red.

For a moment he reeled drunkenly, slashing aimlessly right and left.

Warily parrying his blows Yoshitsune beat back his dazed antagonist.

Suddenly Munemori slipped in a pool of blood and fell prone upon the deck.

In an instant with upraised sword the Minamoto was upon him.

Munemori deftly evaded the stroke and running to the bulwarks plunged into the sea.

Swift as a flash Yoshitsune bounded after the fleeing Taira. In the seething waters they rioted and wrestled like two great dolphins.

Diving under his adversary Yoshitsune seized him by the neck, driving his powerful fingers deeper and deeper into his enemy's throat.

Gasping for breath, Munemori whipped from his baldric an ugly dirk.

With a mighty wrench Yoshitsune tore it from him and hurled it into the air, as the Taira writhed like a serpent struggling to free himself from that relentless grasp. His strength was failing rapidly and his brain whirled as Yoshitsune ever tightened his inexorable fingers.

"Spare me," he gasped, his voice scarce audible. "I yield!"

Yoshitsune, all too late, relaxed his iron grip. The Taira smiled as he sank lifeless upon the breast of his enemy.

An agonized wail broke from the Taira. Fighting to the last, shattered but unconquered, one by one the great ships sank. Where once had been a fleet was now but a mass of mangled bodies and blood. Only the flagship remained afloat with the trembling women of the court.

"'Tis the end," cried the Taira. "Shall our beloved live to be slaves of Minamoto lords?" Thrusting their swords into the hearts of wives and children they cast themselves into the sea.

Morning Glory crouched in a corner with the child Mikado. She had seen her lover, locked in the arms of his enemy, vanish in the deep and deemed him lost.

Buckling the sacred sword about the infant's waist she cried defiantly:

"Ne'er will I suffer the foe to lay hands upon my Heaven-descended sovereign." Stroking his forehead lovingly she joined together his little hands, and bade him breathe a prayer.

He turned to the west and called upon the name of Buddha. He turned to the east and bade adieu to the shrines of the Immortal Gods.

Asagao clasped him to her breast.

"Let us journey to the Eternal Land," she cried and leaped into the sea.

"Alas, the pity! Alas, the pain! The merciless billows engulfed the Jewel Child!" A fleeting moment and the divine sovereign was but flotsam upon the tide of Eternity.

Down fathomless depths sank Asagao. It seemed to her that the Sea Dragon enwrapt her in cold envenomed coils. Vainly she strove to throw them off, they only held her closer. Then suddenly, no longer cold, they were bearing her swiftly upward!

When Morning Glory drifted back to consciousness all was silent, save for drowsy lapping of the waves. The sun laughed in a cloudless sapphire sky. Beaming upon her with love unutterable stood Yoshitsune.

"In vain I strove to save the Jewel Child," he said self-reproachfully; then, smiling: "Kwannon be blessed, thou art restored to me!

"My life a darksome garden was, before
Therein one day you came, the Sun to bring,
Flower of the Dawn! to fill for evermore,
My heart with Love's bright Spring."
(KOYOSHI.)

CHAPTER VII

THE FOLLY OF THE KHAN

(From the "Perilous Peregrinations" of Messer Marco Polo.)

To Chipangu[1] did Kublai Khan
An expedition vast decree;
Where dwelt the Minamoto clan,
'Mid treasures measureless to man,
Beyond the eastern sea.
So there he sent a mighty fleet
With horse and foot and arms replete,
To scourge the land with famine, sword, and flame,
The flowery isle where blooms the cherry tree,
Till all should yield subjection to his name!
Thus Kublai in his folly did decree.

But of that Mongol horde, which boldly started
Down the green hills athwart the sea to sail,
A merry crew that from Cathay departed,
Returned a sorry handful broken-hearted,
Famished and spent, to tell the shameful tale.
And so befell, an if ye list my story,
Unto the fleet as I shall now relate,
Disaster dire and murder red and gory,
A harvest reaped of two dead brothers' hate.

[1]Chipangu—ancient Chinese name for Japan.

FOREWORD

FORASMUCH as my most veracious chronicles have been slanderously named lying fabrications, do I hereinafter reserve these, the most curious of my voyages in orient lands, to be set forth

publicly only after this generation shall have utterly departed, and a more enlightened race arisen to give them credence.

As to the wanton insinuations concerning my veracity, suffice it to state that the sobriety and moderation of this narrative refuteth these accusations. For, look you, were it my will to deceive, could I not prevaricate with greater proficiency? Hath not my creator endowed me with sufficient imagination and ingenuity of conceit? An I would, I might uncover such a tale of wonder as should pale to pretty prattle the misadventures of Sailor Sindbad or the amorous nocturnal prowlings of that he-cat Haroun Al Raschid.

In the stead thereof what have I indited? Marry but a plain tale of a few paltry fights, slayings a many and rescues innumerable, sweetly spiced with torture by fire and bitings of mad wolf-hounds. The closeting in a bath-house with a nymph more beauteous and bare than Venus, hidings in the mazzard of the idol Daibutsu, love most brave and ardent, death most dire and lamentable. The wreckings of a typhoon in all history most vast and terrible, with the miraculous bringing together of two hearts fashioned for one another from the foundations of the world.



"Mad merchants and their mountainous dromedary"
(Hokusai)

The Daibutsu



"Softened by sorrows of the centuries, his slanted eyes gaze gravely down on garden and on tomb"

Such, gentle reader, is the simple, tempered, and unadorned tale of unassailable truth now laid before ye by one whose heroic deeds have ever spoken more loudly in his praise than his over-modest and self-deprecatory tongue.

There be likewise reasons of state wherefore the secrets herein sealed should not be disclosed during the lifetime of that puissant potentate, my gracious patron, the all-powerful monarch, Kublai Khan, King of Tartary and Emperor of Cathay; for so contrary to the policies of that august sovereign are certain of the emprises, that belike he himself might be constrained to disown them.

So, enough of exordium and let us to the meat of our chronicle.

I

HOW I CAME TO CATHAY, THE REALM OF THE GREAT GRAND KHAN

For your silks to Sugarmago! For your dyes to Ispahan!
Weird fruits from the Isle o' Lamaree!
But for magic merchandise,
For treasure trove and spice,
Here's a catch and a carol to the great grand Khan,
The King of all the Kings across the sea!

Merchants from Cathay,
WILLIAM ROSE BENةT.

It was in autumn of the year of our salvation one thousand two hundred and seventy-five that I, Marco Polo, Venetian merchant and voyageur, stood in a bazaar of the ancient city of Bokhara chaffering rugs, when into the market-place wended a caravan of mad merchant-men.

Mad do I advisedly nominate them, for a more disordered, brawling, bawling, cursing, sword-loosing, maid-bussing, lewd, and loathly crew hath it ne'er been my lot to encounter.

Bronzed were their faces beneath scarlet fez and white turban, broidered their robes, but foul with desert dust, and keen their scimitars as many a poor wretch, foolhardy enough to anger them, learned to his cost. Strange little, striped mules, cleped zebras, they be-strode, and mountainous dromedaries bedecked with sumptuous trappings and tinkling bells.

Many and outlandish were their costly wares: all manner of attars and gems, carven tusks of elephants, tiger and panther skins, and countless chests of a certain dried herb, whence they decocted a hot seductive beverage.

All these they spread in the bazaar, bartering for my commodities. Having overmatched them in every bargain, so great was their

admiration that perforce must I journey with them to their land, and to this, after much chaffering as to my recompense, I at length consented.

Across interminable deserts and over lofty mountains toiled our motley caravan. Through dangers manifold we came at last to Cambaluc[1] in the Empire of Cathay; and with much rejoicing I was conducted to the great grand Khan.

[1]That part of Peking now known as the Tartar City.

II

THE CAVE OF VOICES AND TWO DEAD BROTHERS' HATE.

In Xanadu did Kublai Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

Wherein a mighty fountain flung up ever
Mad dancing rocks from out that sacred river,
And, 'mid this tumult, Kublai heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying War!
COLERIDGE.

Upon a day the Emperor summoned me saying:

"Come with me, Friend, and I will disclose to thee a wonder of wonders."

Whereupon we journeyed far without the mighty wall Jenghis Khan had builded, across leagues of tawny desert to the snow-mantled mountains, in whose verduous depths nested a lovesome garden. Amid black cypresses I beheld pinnacles and golden domes illumined by the sun till they blazed as though carven in amber against a sapphire sky.

Oft had I heard of its forbidden delights,—wondrous silver peacocks, which moved gem-studded tails, golden singing-birds, scented viands served by houris of Paradise; therefore great was my chagrin when the Khan entered not its open portal.

In the stead thereof he plunged into a deep ravine, winding his way along a tumbling torrent, which, 'neath overarching boughs, descended ever deeper in gloom, till it glided beneath a natural archway of rock at the foot of a lofty precipice.

Then Kublai set free his horse, and I likewise, and we entered into a boat which lay moored among the rushes, loosing which we swept into the cavern and a great darkness wrapped us in its gloom.

But, presently, as we whirled on, I saw lights as the eyes of panthers in the night. No eyes were they but torches set in iron sockets, where the subterranean river swept in sharp angles round walls of jagged rock which we avoided by the means of boathooks. And so on and on through cavern after cavern which as we neared and passed the torches I perceived to be hung with stalactites of many-coloured crystals as it were great gems. Thus came we at length to the great and dazzling Hall of the Chrysolites; gorgeous with myriad lights, each lamp reflected an hundred times from its many-facetted crystals.

In the centre was a bottomless pit, circular in shape and parapeted by a low wall of sliming crystal. The place reverberated with a roar as of surges breaking upon the shore.

What is this awesome sound?" I questioned timorously.

Drawing me back from the yawning abyss, the Khan cried, "Wait!"

Then, with a roar of thunder, there rose a geyser, casting up stones, which fell at our very feet. Suddenly the fountain uttered hoarse, menacing cries. War! War! War!

Certes I was affrighted; my hair rose like bristles on the mane of a boar and my flesh was suffused with icy sweat.

When the tumult had subsided the Khan caught my arm:

"Thou didst hear the talking water?" he questioned. "Tis the spirit of my grandsire, crying ever, 'Chipangu! Chipangu!' Ne'er will that voice be silenced until I have obeyed its mandate and conquered the cradle of his race."

"Thy grandsire, august monarch, as the world doth know, was the all-puissant Mongul conqueror, Jenghis Khan!"

"The world doth stand in misprision, Friend Marco," he retorted, "for Jenghis Khan was none other than the famous outlaw, Minamoto no Yoshitsune.

******

While we cantered joyfully homeward, under the blessed luminance of moon and stars, the Khan related to me the story of two dead brothers' hate.

Returning in triumph from Dan-noura to lay the heads of the Taira chieftains before Yoritomo at Kamakura, Yoshitsune was most foully set upon by his brother's samurai, and fled to mountain fastnesses.

Surrounding his home, Yoritomo took captive his defenceless wife. Though she was soon to become a mother he demanded that Morning Glory be brought before him to dance, for the entertainment of his court.

Undaunted she came, singing the prowess of her mis-fortunate lord so winsomely that all who beheld and heard wept for very pity.

All save Yoritomo who, with heart harder than a nether millstone, doomed her to instant death.

But his wife, the noble Lady Masa, took pity upon her and shielded the woeful woman until her son was born.

Thereupon Yoritomo commanded that the child be strangled; and cast the mother forth to wander barefoot 'midst the winter snows.

But the faithful Benkei, strong as a bull, yet gentle-hearted as a child, discovered Morning Glory and bore her in safety to her husband.

Yoritomo gave out that Yoshitsune, seeing himself vanquished, committed seppuku, having first plunged his sword into the heart of his loyal wife.

Most false was this report as my story shows, for, guised as begging-bonzes, Yoshitsune, Morning Glory, and the faithful Benkei plodded over mountain and vale till they made their toilsome way to the Yellow Sea. Here it was their hap to fall in with a pious pirate, who through manifold ventures, dire and perilous, brought them safe at last to the sunny land of Arabia.

A full score years dwelt Yoshitsune among the wild and turbulent Tartars, when, their chieftain dying, they made him monarch, the all-powerful Jenghis Khan.

At the head of a mighty army he swept like an avenging flame across the steppes of Tartary, conquering and unconquerable, over the Ural Mountains to the gates of Moscow. Here he met with bloody defeat, and, turning eastward, subjugated Cathay and established his kingdom at Cambaluc.[1]

[1]Jenghis Khan placed under tribute a greater territory than was ever before subject to a single sovereign.

Whereupon he laid up vast stores of munitions against the invasion of Chipangu, not so much to make himself sovereign of so fair an isle as to wreak vengeance upon his unnatural brother.

"So bitter was my grandsire's hatred," said Kublai Khan, "that, though I was but a lad of ten years when he died, yet he made me swear eternal enmity toward Yoritomo and his descendants, till the last remaining spawn of his vile tribe be for ever exterminated.

"One other scene," quoth he, "do I remember. Some whiles after his master's death, Benkei bade me a last farewell ere he returned to avenge the murder of the infant son of Yoshitsune."

"A blithe and wondrous tale, Sire, I exclaimed. "Indeed I marvel not that thou fain wouldst view thy fair ancestral land. When dost thou purpose thither to set sail?"

"This very month," cried the Khan eagerly, "thither will I despatch an embassy demanding submission, wherein, garbed as a simple subject, I shall accompany them unknown."

"Yet, Sire," I protested, "were it not a most exceeding reckless venture thus to put thy life in jeopardy? Should these rascals penetrate thy disguisement they would tear thee limb from limb."

'Tis for this small peril," quoth he, "that the notion liketh me well. I had thought, my valiant Marco, to hale thee with me on this quest, but if thou hast no stomach for the wild bee's honey I shall in no wise upbraid thee."

"Verily," I cried, "whither thou wendest thither will I; and, though we be stung to the quick, yet perchance we shall sip of such honey" (and here I spake more truly

than I wotted) "as we shall deem cheaply purchased, even by the sting of death."

III

HOW WE CAME TO A HIVE OF WILD BEES; AND OF THE HONEY WHICH WE GATHERED

A fair wind blows.
The good ship goes
Swift flying o'er the sea.
The sails uplift and clap their hands
In eagerness and glee.

Thus came we to Kamakura the capital of the Regent, for none might approach the sacred person of the Mikado, and the Shoguness, the awesome Lady Masa, on account of her great age, held herself in seclusion.

The Khan, better to preserve his incognito, kept himself in the background and bade me address the Regent. This I did through the medium of a Korean interpreter, not willing to divulge the fact that I both understood and spake Chipangese.

When I had concluded, a doomful hush fell upon the throng. Hojo Tokimune scrabbled within his beard lie whiles a deep scowl knitted his brows.

A lean, fox-faced councillor whom I particularly disaffected, addressing the interpreter, pointed at me significantly and I heard the whispered words.

In a flash I comprehended that my kingly bearing had so impressed itself upon these gentlemen that they mistook me for the Grand Khan. Swelling with gratification and frowning haughtily, I turned my back upon the person who had so complimented me.

But now the eyes of Tokimune glared upon me, searching, suspicious, and menacing, like a cat watching a mouse, which, fascinated, ventures nearer and nearer, while the crouching furry flanks grow tense and the deadly claws steal from their sheath ready for the spring.

Then a veil seemed drawn over those windows whence the soul had momently peered, and he spake in purring accents, bowing obsequiously the whiles.

“The illustrious General declareth,“ translated the Korean, “that had my Lord advertised him aforetime of his purposed visitation——“

“It is my desire,“ I made answer condescendingly, “that my entertainment shall in no wise differ from that of my envoys.“

The words and mien of Tokimune were alike inscrutable. Smiling sardonically he led the way to the garden. I followed in blind incertitude as to what this might portend.

My forebodings were confirmed when the Khan suddenly grasped my arm:

“Ware thee, Marco,“ he cautioned beneath his breath. “Hojo hath commanded that we be beheaded. For the moment mask thine alarm; but when I give the sign—flee!“

An icy sweat oozed from my every pore.

Tokimune with hateful sneering face pressed close upon me.

“Is the honorable Tojin ill?“ he snarled. “Meseems thy complexion hath assumed the hue of a green olive.“

Verily,“ assented the Khan, “the melons of which my master partook anon have engendered most damnable gripes. Needs must he repose himself for a little space. Request is proffered that the august General retire.“

Bowing obsequiously our host resumed his promenade.

Parting the foliage the Khan disclosed a wall. “Mount upon my shoulder and leap!“ he whispered.

“But what of yonder side?“ I gasped.

“It can hold naught worse than death!“ was his reply.

In a trice I gained the summit and, giving my friend hand, we were over. Before us lay a garden wondrous fair. Crimson peonies glowed like lanterns in the bosky gloom. A path of stepping-stones led to a lotus pool upon whose marge stood a little temple.

Into that sanctuary incontinent I rushed. Within its perfumed dusk, to our mutual confusion, I found myself face to face with, nay almost in the arms of a toothsome morsel of female loveliness! With one hand she strove to gather her scanty raiment about her nude white body while with the other she would fain have thrust me forth.

Kneeling I kissed her feet beseeching, in words that rushed haphazard from frenzied lips, somewhat on this wise:

“O Goddess of all beatitude, have pity upon a fugitive doomed to die. Fountain of bliss, peach of lusciousness, thy cheek is the heart of a sea-shell, thy lips slices of ripe pomegranates, thy bosom a foam-flowered wave, thine arms—“

Here the Goddess stayed my transports in accents that strove to be severe, yet, meseemed, were kind:

“August Stranger, cease thine ill-timed importunities; and tell me from what peril thou dost flee.“

As hunters beating a jungle where croucheth a great tiger so at that instant there arose the hue and cry of my pursuers.

Better to move her compassion, most shamelessly I lied: "Behold in me Kublai Khan of great Cathay, secretly come to these shores for fame of thy surpassing charm. Now that I have seen thee I die content."

"Nay, thou shalt not die," she whispered, casting over me her silken robe, as there came a loud knocking at the door and a disrespectful hand wrested it wide, and abashed by that celestial vision as swiftly closed it again.

A voice rose in pleading apology: "Light of my eyes, jewel of my heart, O thou delight and torment of my soul—had I known thou wert here I would have thrust my hand into the flame rather than so have affronted thee. My beloved, my betrothed, forgive this outrage of thy modesty—"

But the lady thus addressed shrilled: "Off with thee, I take thy rude soldiery from my garden. Call no more betrothed, for I die of shame and hatred at thought of thee, thou mountain of vileness, thou demon of audacity."

With that, like a whipped dog, he led his myrmidons from the place; and we heard the clank of their armour dwindle to silence.

Arraying herself in the robe with which she had shrouded my head, the lady sallied forth and in a while returned bringing sweet assurance that all were indeed clean gone. "Wend swiftly," she counselled, "to the seashore yonder. There are fishing boats whereby thou mayst escape."

To the nearest of these I prepared to swim, but started back in horror, for, washed close to shore by lie sluggish current, there rose and fell two headless bodies.

I knew these mutilated corpses for our comrades and, sickening at the gruesome sight, turned from lie river, seeking other means of escape. Happily it was close at hand, a wicket gate in the wall. As I discerned it I was ware of a pack of wolf-hounds scenting the bloody

corpses; and faint with fear, I sprang through the gate and bolted it on the farther side.

IV

HOW I HID IN THE MAZARD OF THE IDOL DAIBUTSU

At Kamakura in the forest gloom
O'ertopping palm and pine in solemn guise,
There sits a brazen god serene and wise,
Enthroned upon the golden lotus bloom.
Mysterious, peaceful, passionless as doom,
Peering from half-closed lids, his slanted eyes
Softened by sorrows of the centuries
Gaze gravely down on garden and on tomb.

Greeting with equal face both joy and dole,
Faint flickering shadows from the fronded palm
Touch his impassive lips as though he smiled
Pitiful, gentle as a little child,
Benignant Buddha, god of blissful calm,
Embodiment of all the Orient's soul

A towering tori guarded an avenue whose fronded palms shaded a mighty temple.[1]

[1]The Daibutsu, now vaulted only by the sky, was anciently enclosed in a temple, destroyed in 1369 by a tidal wave.

Casting off my sandals I reverently entered. Through shadowy dusk and wreathing incense, like a giant genie, loomed before me a golden idol, silent, colossal, and mysterious. Breathless with awe I stood at gaze, so grand and godlike was the giant.

Suddenly the hush was broken by the hue and cry of my pursuers. Trembling with terror I cast myself upon my knees and prayed:

“Benignant Buddha, succour a fugitive in woeful plight. Suffer not these devils to pollute thy holy shrine with my unworthy blood. Thou, who gayest thyself to a tigress to feed her famished cubs, save me who am of greater worth than a host of tiger cats!“

Belling lustily the wolf-hounds drew nearer and nearer till I heard the stealthy padding of their feet. Then dallied I no longer for vain orisons but ran for very life. Round the great Daibutsu post-haste I sped, and, chancing upon a door, found myself within its capacious carcase, where, half hidden in the gloom, dangled a welcome rope.

Swiftly I clomb, but not in time to ‘scape the foremost hound which tore my gamashes from my calves, inflicting wounds both grievous and bloody. Kicking lustily I freed myself from his ravenous fangs and I mounted into the mazzard of the god. Drawing up the rope, I nursed my gnawed shins and looked down with equanimity upon the baffled brutes as they leaped and yelped, lolling their long red tongues from which dripped a frothy slaver.

While I was laughing at their discomfiture there entered the temple two suppliants: a bent old bonze, prating garrulously with the fair maiden of the bath, who bore a basket of meats.

Sniffing this the curs swarmed greedily about her. Seizing a besom the old man, more valiant than wise, belabored them soundly. Whereupon the infuriated hounds sprang snarling at his throat.

Suddenly, whence I know not, with unsheathed scimitar, leapt the Khan, and with a twirl of his flashing blade, sliced me their heads.

“Hast suffered scathe, Stranger?“ he questioned courteously, his eyes the whiles drinking the maiden‘s beauty.

“Nay,“ grunted the bonze, “had this besom but been a halberd, right lustily would Benkei have disembowelled those curs.“

Here I marvelled, "So this doddering, dim-eyed tonsure is the heroic henchman of Yoshitsune!"

But the Khan had eyes only for my nymph of the bathing-pool, whom he thus bespake:

"Lady, art thou in sooth a mortal, or e'en a heaven-descended houri of Paradise?"

The Maiden: "Noble Seignior, I am but a mortal princess, cleped Flower of the Orange, hither come in quest of thine august master."

The Khan: "My master! Of whom dost thou speak?"

The Maiden: "Verily of the all-puissant Khan of Cathay, whom I sheltered from his foes."

The Khan: "Vaunted that scurvy rascal that he was the Emperor?"

The Maiden: "Truly, my lord, had he not admitted it, his royal mien would have betrayed to me his rank. Let us straightway bear him these viands for it is not meet that his imperial majesty should die of hunger."

"That he will not ," cried the Khan, incontinently devouring a collop of venison, garnished with sea slugs. Thereupon, perceiving the goodly viands vanishing beneath my greedy eyes, I descended.

"Lo, behold!" cried the Emperor, winking at me behind the maiden's back, "here cometh my noble lord and master, the great, grand Khan."

Lowily I louted, "Truly, noble Lady, I disclaim these paltry honours," I mumbled deprecatingly.

“Eat, Sire,“ thundered the Khan, stuffing my mouth with morsels of flesh, as he whispered me:

“Hold thy tongue, rascal. Let it appear that thou art myself.“

“Beware, my Masters,“ Benkei cried suddenly, these be the wolf-hounds of Tokimune!“

“Belly of Beelzebub!“ I spluttered, my stomach turning at the thought, “this dainty venison is then but damned dog-flesh?“

“Heaven forbid,“ laughed the Khan, “rather the beasts I but lately slew.“

“Yea, honourable Sir,“ reiterated Benkei, “and anon the lord of the beasts will be upon us to wreak vengeance for their death.“

But the Khan, who had turned again to Orange Blossom, gave him no heed; and Benkei besought me anxiously:

“I pray thee, good Sir, aid me to cast their carcases in the river.“

“That will I gladly, “ I replied; but Orange Blossom cried out:

“Thou art wounded! See, good Sir, thy master bleedeth!“

“Nay, ‘tis but a scratch,“ I shrugged, and shouldering a hound I trudged after Benkei.

Of a sudden armed men sprang upon me crying:

“Tis he whom we seek,“ and binding my limbs they bore me to a cave, whose mouth was stockaded with great logs chained stoutly each to other.

V

THE TORTURE CHAMBER, AND MY MARVELLOUS DELIVERANCE THEREFROM

Within, a fire of coals burned upon a forge as in a farrier's smithy and grievous instruments of discomfiture, pincers, pulleys, goads, and their like, lay littered about. Holding my head in place with a great pronged fork, two Etas bound me upon a plank and stripped my feet for the bastinado.

Thus I lay in agonized suspense until the arrival of Hojo Tokimune and his councillors, who took their seats on cushions, laid upon a raised platform at the end of the apartment.

"Cursed Mongol," he hissed, "slayer of my beauteous dogs, spying monkey, confess the infernal schemes which thou dost meditate against this country."

"I am no Mongol," I retorted, "but a noble Venetian gentleman cleped Marco Polo, fallen in by mischance with these accursed Tartars."

"Liar!" he exclaimed, giving me a stinging slap on the cheek with his fan, "the truth shall be forced from thee. Bid the torturer enter and apply the moxa!"

With that an executioner, whose face was blackened it ii charcoal, stepped from behind a screen and, lifting a pot of molten copper from the fire, placed it beside me. I felt the heat rising therefrom but it scorched me not so much as the pitless glare of Tokimune's evil eyes.

"Whelp, wilt thou die inch by inch under torture, or by a swift merciful stroke? If the latter, confess and thy raw wounds shall have other anointing."

"Have mercy, dreadsome potentate," I besought. "I have told thee the truth."

"The moxa!" he commanded, "and if that looseth not the beast's tongue give him to drink of thy hot liquor."

With that the executioner drew from out the forge white-hot metal rod and thrust it hissing upon my lacerated limbs; the whiles Tokimune laughed derisively at my agonized howls. But, as my tormentor forced open my jaws, holding a steaming ladle above my face, Tokimune cried: "Hold, let him not yet drink that draught lest he be not able to answer further inquisition."

As he spake I heard a light step, then respectful sibilations such as greet an honoured guest, and the voice of the Princess Orange Blossom rang forth.

"Reckless man, dost thou put to torture the monarch of a mighty realm who hath honoured our land by visiting it nebon?[1] Know that thy guest is the great Khan of Tartary. Wherefore do I counsel thee, release and entreat him honourably, that he forgive thee thine offence."

[1]Nebon, incognito.

Tokimune regarded her with sullen suspicion. "How earnest thou by this knowledge?" he demanded.

Imperiously she tossed her head. "Not yet am I thy wife to endure thine inquisition. Only to the Ama Shogun will I make answer!"

Red waxed his face as the setting sun. "Doubt not," he muttered, "that the Shoguness shall have full knowledge of thy deeds. Torturer, loose, the prisoner's bonds, but let him not flee this dungeon! Assuage his burns with oil, for he must not perish without the command of the Ama Shogun!"

Thus speaking he departed leading with him the Princess.

Whereupon the torturer wiped from his face the charcoal, and to my great amaze I beheld—the Khan!

Whereat I waxed exceeding wroth: "Serpent that I nursed in my bosom, fiend that I deemed my friend," I vituperated, "why hast thou thus maltreated me?"

"Softly, softly," he expostulated. "When thou wert carried to this place, with gold I bribed the torturer that thus I might save thee. I did but cauterize thy wounds, fearing the cur that mangled thee was mad."

"But wherefore wouldst thou have seared my throat with molten copper, seeing the curs bit not my tongue?"

"Friend, I did but feign. Had Hojo persisted thou wouldst have drunk but hot water. But, an thou hast stomach for other sport 'twere well, methinks, to profit by the laxness of our host. Benkei waiteth without. There be but a few poltroon guards. Thy hands are unhurt. Meseems we are a match for the rogues."

Arming myself with a great sledge, I followed. But ere we gained the portal the sentries fell upon us. The entry was so narrow that all could not win at us at the same time. The greater number the Khan transfixed, the rest put I gently to sleep with my hammer. Moreover it was no fragile besom but a mighty halberd with which Benkei pierced their bellies and scythed their heads.

And thus, night having fallen, we sought shelter once more within the mazzard of the Buddha.

VI

OF THE MARVELLOUS MANNER IN WHICH WE ESCAPED

“Needs must,“ cried the Khan, “that we seek our ship and flee this accursed land. Bestir thyself, Benkei, and fetch us steeds.“

“In all the temple compound is but one, the Sacred Horse, which none but the Mikado may bestride,“ demurred the bonze.

“I‘ faith it will suffice,“ grinned the Khan. “Fetch it forthwith.“

But Benkei remained obdurate. “Who art thou, Stranger, that I should further imperil my head for thy safety?“ he demanded doggedly.

Whereat I shouted: “Fool, thou didst boast thyself the henchman of Yoshitsune. Know then that thou beholdest now his august grandson!“

With loud in-sucking of breath, Benkei kowtowed at the feet of the Khan, humbly kissing his sandals.

When he had left us the Khan spake: “Friend Marco,“ he confided timorously, “whilst thou didst leave me yestreen with that lovely lady she made known to me her parentage. She is the Princess Orange Blossom, granddaughter of Yoritomo. Yet forgat I the blood fetid between us and wooed her warm and tenderly; nor, meseemed, was the maid unmindful of my suit. Wherefore I will not leave her. Mount thou the steed and seek the ship. Here will I bide till I devise some scheme whereby to take her to Cathay.“

“Nay, that thou shalt not,“ I opposed him strenuously, as Benkei led forth the Mikado‘s steed. “Away while yet there is time.“

“Then mount behind me,“ commanded the Khan, setting foot in stirrup.

"My wounded legs will not suffer me to grip the charger's flanks," I urged. "Since I can neither run nor ride needs must I hide. Wait thou at Miyajima, I hither will fetch thy lady."

"Here in sooth is friendship," cried the Khan. "May the god who watcheth over love-smitten fools protect thee," and flinging the bonze a purse he gave spur to his steed.

Now as I stood racking my brains how to fulfil my promise came a boy with a pannier of victuals from Lady Orange Blossom. Therein she had concealed a letter advising me that our flight from the torture chamber had been discovered and entreating us to return with all speed to our own land. But of this I wotted not till after, for Tokimune, deeming that through her he might compass our discomfiture, had supplanted the missive by another which read thus wise:

> "In vain throughout the endless night
> I wait thy coming, Dear,
> Until the moon's wan silvery light
> Pales on the morning clear.

Therefore, divine Master, at moonrise meet me by the bathing-pool. There will I grant thee thy heart's desire."

"Thinketh Tokimune to befool me thus simply?" I laughed, penetrating his schoolboy device. "This from Orange Blossom, the very soul of purity? Nay, it cannot be."

But soon thereafter, her face aglow with an undreamed joy, came Orange Blossom to the temple.

"I found thy letter," she faltered, her eyes abased, "but someone spyeth by the pool, so came I hither."

"My letter! I sent thee none," I blurted in amazement.

“Didst thou not bid me forsake all for thee?“ she questioned trembling. “Then in sooth am I shamed.“

“Heaven forbid, dear Lady, that I, a hopeless fugitive, should bid thee share my peril. Yet hath mine enemy wrought me a blessing in bringing thee.“

Then passionately I strove to persuade her to journey with me to my friend.

“What friend is this,“ she flashed scornfully, “who deserteth his sovereign?“

“Sweet Princess,“ I cried, “I can no longer conceal the truth—he is the Emperor!“

“Why didst thou deceive me?“ she reproached sadly.

“I did but play his part to save him from Tokimune,“ I pleaded. “In pity, merciful Goddess, despise me not.“

“Despise thee!“ she laughed, her eyes agleam with delight. “Thou art the noblest friend I e’er have known. List,“ she urged, “yestreen for love of thee I broke with Tokimune. Today I go to the Shoguness. Even now am I upon my way, and will bear thee with me.“

As she spake the Princess threw off her broidered robe and tired me, willy-nilly, therein.

“Give me thy dirk,“ she commanded. In a twinkling she had severed her glorious tresses, and, coiling them about my head, fastened them with jewelled pins, and with a fragment of charcoal pencilled me arching eyebrows.

Miyajima



“A harvest moon silvered the sacred isle as we drifted through the water-gate“
(by Frère Champney)

“Lo, thou art now a lovely maid!“ she laughed. “Hold thy fan thus, and thou wouldst deceive Hojo himself.“

“And thou a most adorable boy!“ I exclaimed, for she had donned my doublet and hose.

“Haste thee to my norimon,“ she cried, “for time is that we were upon our way.“

Bestowing myself therein I chuckled complacently:

“Marco, thou art surely the favourite of Fortune, for in sooth the Princess loveth thee.“

But while I thus laughed within myself, suddenly, with a clatter of hoofs and clank of mail, the troop of Tokimune galloped up.

Mistaking me for the Princess, Hojo gallantly saluted:

“Vouchsafe, my Adored One, that I may escort thee on thy journey.“

“I will befool him to my heart‘s content,“ thought I, simpering maidenwise.

“Paragon of Beauty, I die for love of thee,“ he pleaded.

“And I for thee, my Hero,“ I sighed amorously. Thereupon he sprang from his steed and burst into the norimon. Babbling words of endearment he crushed me in a passionate embrace.

Shrieking in outraged modesty I buffetted him a resounding smack.

Agog with stupefaction he glared at me a moment and was gone.

On we journeyed o‘er vale and mountain till we reached the Ujigawa. In the midst of the turbulent stream the litter was suddenly overturned.

Encumbered by my unaccustomed draperies I was sinking, when Hojo plunged into the seething current, and, as I was on the point of drowning, dragged me to the shore.

Fearing for my discovery, Orange Blossom ran to me and set straight my wig, which was sore awry.

I vomited forth firkins of water while he gloated upon my throes.

When we left the mainland for the sacred isle Tokimune bade us farewell.

“Doubt not that I shall seek thee again,“ he smiled ii ironically, “then thou wilt not escape.“

VII

MOON GAZING AT MIYAJIMA. CAT AND MOUSE

So beauteous is thy face, O autumn moon,
I fain would gaze thereon the livelong night.
TEITOKU.

A harvest moon silvered the sacred isle as we drifted through the water-gate.

The locks of Orange Blossom gleamed like the aureole of a madonna.

“Miyajima!“ I mused regretfully; “our journey is nearly ended.“

Methought a cloud shadowed the serene brow of my companion. “Then must we part?“ she sighed.

“Nay,“ I remonstrated, “oft shall we meet upon the ship.“

“How may that be?“ she queried, perplexed.

“Wouldst thou not for love‘s sake sail to far Cathay?“ I urged.

“For love‘s sake,“ she smiled assent, lifting her joy — brimmed eyes to mine.

Whereat I kissed her mouth in true Venetian fashion. She lingered a moment, then drew back affrighted.

Then, abashed that I had forgotten my friend, I burst into his praise, pleading his suit with all my wonted eloquence.

But the hand in mine lay limp and chill. The love-light faded from her eyes. Her lips moved tremulously, striving in vain to smile.

“Bring the Khan on the morrow,“ she said coldly.

“Our little comedy is ended.“

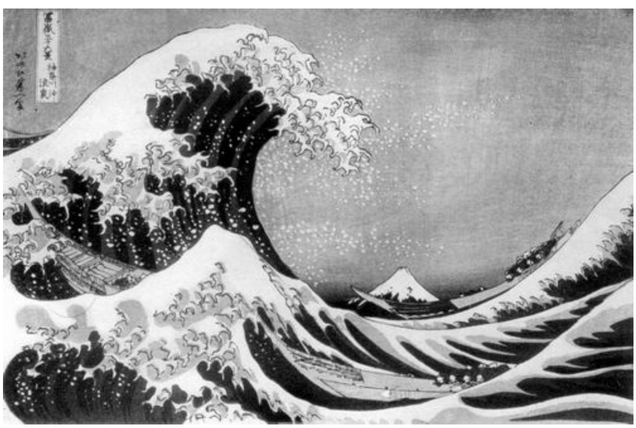
THE TEMPLE OF FUJIN

Frail fluttering bamboo fingers beckon me
And a great bell intones its mellow boom,
Reiterant, mysterious, as doom,
Bidding me bare my feet and silently
Enter, where fringes of linked filigree,
Like rays of sunshine, filter through the gloom,
And fill with golden glory all the room,
Blazoned in cinnabar and lazuli.

An aged priestess calmly sits within
This wondrous, gleaming, gem-encrusted shrine,
O‘ershadowed by a carven baldachin,
Whose silken ropes, hanging in heavy line,
Drip blood-red tassels through the incense mist,
The Shinto symbol for Rome‘s eucharist.



"Niched in its gate a gruesome idol, the Wind God Fujin, brandished the sack of the tempests"



"The typhoon fell upon us with renewed fury, churning the inky waters into frothing suds."
(Hokusai)

In the mists of morning we mounted a rock-hewn staircase to the Temple of the Winds. Niched in its gate a gruesome idol, the Wind-God Fujin, brandished the sack of the tempests.

We entered the glorious interior, at the extremity of which stood a gem-encrusted shrine.

Unseen hands slid the screen aside, disclosing, on a great dragon-throne, a little, wizened crone.

Orange Blossom crept forward on her hands and knees and bumped her dainty head upon the floor, the whiles she kowtowed obsequiously.

Bent and shaking the Shoguness rose. “Foreign Devil,“ she shrilled, “thou art the Mogul

monarch, come hither in disguise. Knowest thou not the penalty is death? Nathless, for that the Princess hath besought me, I pardon thy folly. Return for ever to thine own land!“

“Hear me, gracious Priestess,“ besought the Khan. “No foreign devil I, but thy countryman, a Minamoto of thy very clan.“

The Lady Masa descended from her throne and peered into his visage through age-dimmed eyes. With trembling fingers she traced the profile of the Khan.

“Tis Yoshitsune,“ she shrieked, “come to avenge his murdered son!“

On her knees she sank beseeching piteously: “Spare me, mighty Monarch, even as I saved thy helpless babe from the wrath of Yoritomo. Hearken to my tale.

“Upon the night thy child was born, gave I birth to a son, for whose father‘s crimes, alas! the gods sent dead into the world. Unknown to all I changed my babe for thine, nourished it with these breasts, and reared him for my son.“

Reverently he raised the weeping woman and placed her upon the throne:

“Noble Priestess, the spirit of Yoshitsune doth bless thee for thy wondrous love. Grant of thy gracious clemency yet another boon! Give me the Princess Orange Blossom to be my wife and Empress!“

The aged Shoguness lay pallid, silent, and unheeding. With a heartrending wail the maiden ran to her side, and chafed the cold hands, crooning the whiles words of vain endearment.

“She heareth not,“ murmured the Khan. “Her soul hath found Nirvana.“

Of a sudden there arose a mighty tumult. Priests and attendants rushed hither and thither wailing piteously as they perceived that their beloved Mother Priestess was indeed dead. Verily they would have torn us limb from limb but that a commanding voice cried:

“Hold! Leave the miscreants to me,“ and Tokimune armed cap-a-pie, strode into the hall.

Orange Blossom fell at his feet, beseeching mercy, while the Khan, with bared blade, rushed upon his enemy.

Calmly Hojo folded his arms, reproving him for drawing sword in that sacred place, and bade us follow to the terrace.

“Fool,“ he scoffed derisively, “from the day when first we met have I followed thine every move, playing with thee as cat with mouse. An it pleased my fancy I might have seized and crucified thee. But, Son of Yoshitsune, rather will I fight thee in fair combat in the death.“

“Willingly,“ cried the Khan. His heart throbbed with a great elation. He was drunk with love.

“I will carve my name upon thy heart,“ he boasted confidently.

They charged like stags battling for a doe.

With a lightning flash Hojo severed the crest of his antagonist, baring his cheek to the bone. "She will not love thy visage when I have done," he jibed triumphantly.

Fast and faster they circled, in a furious dance of death. Many a famous fight have I witnessed, but never one like this.

Little by little his breath came short and the Khan's lips grew set as he knew his hour had come.

Suddenly, with a mighty stroke, Hojo cleft through mail and vambrace, slicing his arm from shoulder to wrist. The sword fell from his nerveless grasp.

Setting foot thereon Tokimune scornfully commanded: "Mouse, get thee gone to thy hole! But if e'er thou dost venture forth, I swear by the tempests of Fujin, I will devour thee utterly."

VIII

THE MAGNIFICENT MISADVENTURE

Remembrance

A wistful rune of perished melodies,
Sweet aftermath of music longsyne fled,
Lurks in my inner ear, as sea-shells dead,
Still chalice in their souls the ocean's sighs.
Across the night of yesteryear you rise,
To bless my life with gladsome memory
Of days rose-scented, made of love and thee,
And sweet allurements of thy wild-flower eyes.

Then all my being trembles in a prayer
That once again before my spirit flee

I yet may look upon thy semblance fair,
Still shrined so deeply in my secret soul,
And live a little while with love and thee.
Then come what may! My happiness were whole.

Now you must know that the Khan's flagship lurked hard by. Whereupon by dint of valorous swimming we gained it without further mischance, and, scudding before the favouring monsoon, sailed in safety to Cathay.

A twelvemonth passed. His heart still rankling with revenge, the Khan determined to return with a vast armada, and ravish the isles of Chipangu, if the only plunder he might bear thence were the peerless Princess Orange Blossom.

Wherefore he levied a mighty army of horse and foot and burden-beasts, huge engines of siege and vast supplies.

When I recounted how, during the siege of Modena, by means of a mangonel, I had slung a long-defunct ass into the city, poisoning the enemy by its deadly stench, he was filled with admiration and delight; and bade me fabricate a mighty mangonel such as we Venetians do nominate *mal vezina* (bad neighbours), which would vomit boulders of tremendous weight.

Therewith, in a mock battle, I cast a thousand pig-skins filled with muddy water upon the dumbfounded foe, drenching them most foully, and putting them to ignominious rout.

This moved the Emperor to unseemly merriment, for well he wotted that the Chipangese boasted no such fabrications, and with our "bad neighbours" we would belabour them most mercilessly. Wherefore he commanded that each of his ships should be furnished with a mangonel.

Four hundred fighting junks, war-galleons and lesser ships innumerable, manned by one hundred thousand warriors and twice as many mariners, he gathered for the venture.

Now it fortuned moreover that the Venetians having fallen into dispute with the Genoese, my kinsmen had equipped a galley of an hundred oars and as many lances. Desirous that I should return to take command they voyaged to Cathay, and would have haled me home but that the Khan would hear none of it, entreating me most handsomely to lead his vast enterprise. Whereat like an oat-fed war-horse eager for the fray I joyously consented.

So confident was the Khan of victory that he took with him a train of gold-caparisoned elephants, wherewith to wend in triumph to the capital. In each ship was one bestowed. A pack of fearsome tigers, with which he was wont to hunt, fetched he also, swearing that they should gnaw the bones of Tokimune.

But of that Mongol horde, which boldly started
Down the green hills athwart the sea to sail,
A merry crew that from Cathay departed,
Returned a sorry handful broken-hearted,
Famished and spent, to tell the shameful tale.
And so befell, and if ye list my story,
Unto the fleet as I shall now relate,
Disaster dire and murder red and gory,
A harvest reaped of two dead brothers' hate.

In the Serpent month of the year Fire (June, 1281), the great, grand Khan with a mighty fleet embarked upon his magnificent misadventure.

Having sailed serenely across the Yellow Ocean, we were rounding the rock-bound isle of Tsushima when the fighting-junks of Tokimune fell upon us, like hounds upon a stag. Keen were their fangs, yet with caliber and mangonel we thrust them off, goring many and driving the remnant yelping to their kennels.

Swiftly we followed and drew up our ships in battle array eager for the conflict. But behold! so far as the eye could see the countryside teemed with myriads of Chipangese like swarms of crawling ants building barricade along the shore.

Into their wattled earthworks we flung pots of burning pitch, setting them aflame. Whereat the flame-stricken soldiery sought safety in the open.

Lashing together a long chain of rafts we made a goodly bridge, across which the Khan's horsemen rode swiftly to the land. Making the welkin ring with most unholy clamour, they charged, clashing their gleaming scimitars upon the fleeing foe.

With my Venetian lancers mounted upon mad little zebras, I spurred furiously after. Misliking the pipes and kettledrums the malicious creatures suddenly balked, refusing to budge. Perceiving this, Tokimune and his hatamotos dashed between, cut off our advance, and surrounded the Khan.

Thereupon our misbegotten beasts took bits in teeth and scampered willy-nilly in mad stampede, plunging, kicking, and cavorting into the very thick of the fray.

Seizing the imperial banner, I brandished it in the face of Tokimune.

"Cat," I cried, "thy mouse hath quit his hole!"

Gnashing his teeth, Hojo slashed at me impotently, his blows raining upon my zebra's head. The infuriated little devil turned instant tail and, striking out with its heels, belaboured his charger so merrily that it bolted, bearing its humiliated rider incontinent from the field.

And so befell that we slew the base idolators with gruesome slaughter and carried the Khan in triumph to his flagship.

Full glorious renown gained I for this paltry bickering — "The hardiest feat," thus weened my master, "that ever knight essayed." Wherefore he invested me with the high exalted order of the Flying Zebra.

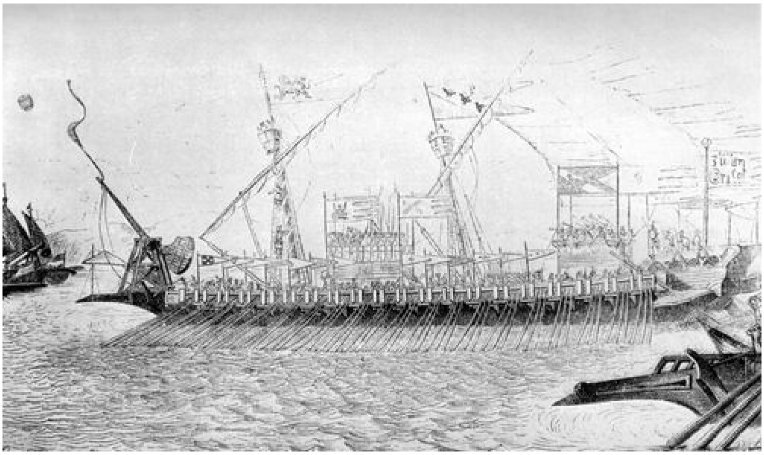
The morn dawned wan and sultry; from a far-off monastery, doomful and dolorous, boomed a mighty bell. The sea, a tawny

green like the mottled coat of a serpent. Beneath the calm, satin surface it heaved with rhythmic undulations. There was no wind, yet from the heavens came a muttering weird and ominous, the wrathful drums of the Thunder God.

It seemed to my bemused fancy that the spirits of Taira warriors were rising from their watery tomb to wreak vengeance upon the grandson of Yoshitsune.

And now a cloud, like unto a mighty dragon, came winging through the east.

Drawing in the oars we furled the sails and lashed the helm, holding the junk's nose to the wind. The hissing spume leapt high above our towering masts. The boom of the surges was like ceaseless salvos of artillery. They bit and tore at embankments, scattering huge boulders as they were tiny pebbles. Only flashes of lightning revealed to one another our terrified faces, for a blackness of night covered the face of the deep.



"At last, to our unbounded delight, we beheld my gallant galley, from whose masthead flaunted defiantly the lion of St. Mark!"
From Yule's "Marco Polo."

“A pirate bold of a galleon old,



A buccaneer and a ruthless brute“
(Hokusai)

The dumb beasts below, frantic with fear, burst their tethers, and, careering amidships, drove the affrighted sailors to the hold. Scarce

had they escaped when a great whirling column of water burst upon us with a tremendous shock, flooding the decks, washing masts and gear overboard, and all but swamping the ship.

Then came a lull in the tempest. The Khan roared to his crew, but not a Tartar dared to venture forth.

Crashing down his gates the elephant ran amuck upon the deck, trumpeting and spouting geysers of water. The zebras clustered about him, biting and kicking in fury unimaginable.

The huge beast responded, trampling, goring, and throttling them with his powerful trunk. Ever and anon the rolling of the junk would cause him to fall, crushing them beneath his monstrous bulk, until the remainder plunged headlong into the sea.

Blundering about in blind confusion, the elephant wrenched the hatchway from its hinges, thrust in his trunk, and dragged forth a cage of tigers, which he rolled like a ball about the ship. On a sudden it burst and the enraged beasts sprang upon him, sinking claws in eyes and teeth in throat.

Then ensued such tumult as hell had broken forth, causing us all rare and pleasant disport.

But now the tempest suddenly burst upon us with greater fury. Certes I would have been washed adrift but that I clung to the bulwark for very life. At the same time someone (the Khan, as I thought) embraced me from behind, digging his nails into my ribs, with a force to which Hojo's clutch in the Ujigawa was but as the blandishments of a gentle maid. Thus he clung while in the inky darkness I beheld and heard naught though he gibbered incoherently in mine ear. Then I felt the beating of his great heart and the rasp of his bristling beard upon my neck. Then my nostrils were assailed by a foul and loathly odour, obscene and most unsavoury.

Grasping the hands which were causing me much discomfiture by their vise-like grip I saw that they were mittened in fur and suddenly comprehended that I was clasped—not in the embrace of my friend, but by the claws of the dreadsome tiger!

Whereat I instantly gave myself up for dead; but, as the brute did not molest me, I presently perceived that it clutched me, not with murderous intent but in deadly fear.

A sudden flash quivered in the sky, and a ghastly shriek burst from the Khan as he staggered feebly to his feet. Small wonder; he had clung to the tiger, mistaking it for me!

A freezing chill succeeded to the sultry tropic heat. Shivering and benumbed the beast slowly relaxed his grasp and was swept into the sea.

The typhoon now fell upon us with renewed fury, churning the inky waters into frothing suds, whirling us round in a dizzy maelstrom mounting ever higher in a toppling wall, which threatened each instant to crush the ship. Above, great swirling clouds joined iii the mad dance, gyrating like ghouls about the grave engulfing the doomed vessel.

Suddenly a tremendous upheaval lifted the junk in air, held it suspended for a moment, then hurtled it back into the sea.

As some mighty Cyclops dashes the heads of his victims each against his fellow, so the whirlwind crashed tar helpless ships one upon another and beat them into shreds.

With a shudder like that of a dying man, the ship gave up its spirit and swirling in the mighty whirlpool sank into the deep. Mingled with the roar of the tempest there rang in my ears a weird, unearthly wail, the death-throes of a myriad drowning men. Then a great darkness engulfed me.

How long I lay tossed midst foam and flotsam, the sport of the pitiless billows, I know not, but at last beneath my foot I felt solid substance and fell swooning upon the strand. At my feet, famished and spent, lay the Khan, and hard by, reeking under the noonday sun, the corpse of the tiger. Near and far the beach was a tangled mass of jetsam and dead bodies, our dear comrades, chill and lifeless, alas! a scene most dire and lamentable. Of all our great armada not a ship remained!

From the heavens glared down a red and merciless sun. Afar, reverberated ever the awesome boom of the temple bell, while cold and relentless a band of wreckers calmly looted the dead.

All day we skulked in the marshes. When night fell, quitting our hiding we quested the coast hoping to find some friendly craft. At last, to our unbounded delight, safe at anchor in a sheltered inlet we beheld my gallant galley, from whose masthead flaunted defiantly the lion of St. Mark!

IX

HOW, BY MEANS OF A MANGONEL, A MOST UNEXPECTED PROJECTILE WAS CAST AT THE FEET OF MY LADY, AND I CAME UNTO MY OWN

My Venetian mariners welcomed us with shouts of delight, rejoicing beyond measure at our miraculous deliverance.

Clapping me on the shoulder, the Khan laughed. “Mindest thou, Friend, the temple islet wherein thou didst go moon-gazing with the lovesome Orange Blossom?“

“Marry, that I do, Master,“ I sighed. “In the chart of my memory is that isle indelibly bemapped.“

“This very night,“ he declared vehemently, “shall we voyage thither. It likes me to do some small moon-gazing upon my own behalf.“

The tempest had abated. In the shadows of the night we stole forth under the very poop of a great fighting junk.

A Daimio armed cap-a-pie strode to the bulwarks and peered malignantly upon us. Though his face was shaded by his visor I could not but recognize his lambent, catlike eyes.

“Aha!“ he cried, “the mouse hath ‘scaped the tempest but by the thousand hands of Kwannon he shall not ‘scape the cat!“

Heedless of his threat, eagerly we sped through the night upon our amorous quest.

A wan moon waned in the west. Dim and ghostly loomed the sacred tori. Beyond, upon a pine-fringed promontory rose the scythe-like roofs of the Temple of Fujin.

“Miyajima, the shrine of my pilgrimage!“ cried lie Khan, as he leapt into the pinnace and bounded over the foam like a hound unloosed from leash.

Sorely against my will I kept my loveless watch, waiting peevishly for his return. A grove of cedars concealed my galley from the channel, where I suddenly spied, sailing swiftly toward the isle—a Chipangese war-junk. In a twinkling I resolved to steal through the landward passage, outspeed the junk, and advertise my master of his peril.

But the fairway was shallow and the shore surrounded by marshes. How to overcome this obstacle would have taxed the cunning of a less imaginative mind, but my native resourcefulness stood me in good stead.

Mounting my trusty mangonel, I trained it assiduously upon the midst of the marsh and, bestowing myself therein as projectile, resolutely let fly.

Like Icarus soared I gloriously through the heavens, and, as ingloriously, fell; but, dropping in the soft and squashy mire, rose foully besmirched but in no wise scathed. By good fortune I had calculated with perfect nicety the trajectory of my flight, else had I dashed out my brains upon the adamantine rocks.

Here I encountered, plying his peaceful craft, a heaven-sent fisherman. By dint of sundry fisticuffs I persuaded him to divest himself of all his habiliments, viz., a broad-brimmed hat, a straw rain-coat, and a crate of eels. Armed with these weapons I boldly clambered up the rock-hewn stairway to the Temple of the Winds.

Well was it that my mud-caked visage constituted a sure incognito, for the terrace swarmed with samurai. There also, to my astonishment and consternation, I beheld my master and Tokimune confronting each other in the same defiant attitudes as a twelvemonth since.

The Khan stared dazedly at his rival as though he saw him not, his courage crushed by sudden-blighted hope.

Tokimune laughed pitilessly.

“Before thee, Princess, stand two men,“ sneered the victor. “Choose thou between. Never shalt thou taunt me that I took to mine arms an unwilling bride. Say the word and ye shall this hour be wedded and have safe-conduct to Cathay. But, an thou lovest him not, will I tear his heart from his carcase and cast it quivering at thy feet.“

Dumb with horror Orange Blossom stared from one to the other. Methought that, had the Khan‘s eye glanced the slightest appeal, she would in sheer pity have sacrificed herself.

Instantly, he answered for her.

“The Princess hath made choice,“ he said, and I knew that there was no fear in the whitened face. “Even now hath she trampled upon my heart.“

Tokimune stood amazed, scarce believing his senses. At last, “Hast thou in sooth cast off this rogue?“ he asked.

“Aye,“ assented Orange Blossom fearlessly, “yet, for that he is my kinsman, he must go unhindered to his land.“

Tokimune hesitated, loth to forego his long-waited revenge.

“The safe-conduct,“ the Princess demanded imperiously.

Whirling upon his heel he snarled: “Begone fool, ere I repent my mercy and slay thee. Advertise the Khan, thy master, of my triumph. ‘Tis not for love but hate I spare thee!“ Then to Orange Blossom he murmured exultingly: “This night shall I claim my reward,“ and thus speaking clattered adown the rock-hewn stairway.

Never had the Khan seemed to me so great a hero as now in his humiliation and despair. He paused for an instant.

“Farewell, lost Blossom, mayest thou have ceaseless joy with him thou lovest,“ he smiled bravely.

Her face flushed until it belied her name.

“Bring him to me,“ she pleaded, “for it is not Tokimune, but Marco whom I love!“

Dumbfounded by this unhoped pronouncement I let fall my crate of eels which now squirmed and wriggled slimily about my lady‘s ankles.

“Remove thy reptiles,“ she shrieked, “get thee gone to the scullery!“ Suddenly she stood at gaze. “Those eyes!“ she gasped, “thou art, forsooth, no fisher.“

“Thy pardon, gem-bright maid,“ I parried courteously, “verily a fisher who dareth death for one surpassing pearl.“

With that she laughed for joy, and leaping into my mire-bedaubed arms yielded her lips to mine in true Venetian fashion. Thence haled she me to a feast of purification, so that my last hour upon the isle of Chipangu ended as my first, in the torrid torrents of a bath!

AFTERWORD

Now ye shall understand, if it like you, that at our home-coming we were wedded with due festivities in the duomo of San Marco, which could scarce contain our admiring and loving friends, also so great a convoy of galleys and gondolas led us to our house one would have thought our barge was the Bucentaur wherein the doge was wont to wed the sea.

Assoiled am I by holy Church of all that lay upon my conscience: to wit the pilfering of his betrothed from Tokimune, who was a parfit, gentil knight, not devoid of courtesy to his foes; and yet more especial the like scurvy trick played upon my most beloved friend, the great grand Khan, though methinks he would have served me a like turn but for his impotent insuffisance.

Some small solace hath he in his garden of an hundred wives and sundry other sweethearts, though none, nor all together, could surpass my one sole Orange Blossom.

A camel's load of presents: rubies, peridots, and diamonds; raiment of orfrays set with orient pearls; chalices of jade and crystal, together with a moult of such like trifles, conveyed he me by caravan under escort of the very same mad merchants that fetched me to Cathay.

These gentlemen I entertained with carnival and blithe disports, painting the good town a glorious vermilion, so that the Council haled them over the Bridge of Sighs, wherefrom I was at sorry costage to ransom them.

Thus I, a simple gentleman adventurer who meandered in many strange lands and oceans, consorted with kings and emperors, and wrought many a fair deed of arms, am come at last to the end of my

peregrinations. And so, honoured Reader, of your courtesy repeat for me an Ave Maria that so the good Lord may shrive me of this my mendacious galimatias, that in his holiness I yet may live.

Written by me, Marco Polo, in my palazzo in the Contrada of San Giovanni Chrisostomo, Venice, the year of grace one thousand two hundred and ninety-five.

'Tis Christmas Eve. Upon the moonlit balcony stands my child-wife, bearing upon her fragile shoulder a bouncing bambino. About her placid forehead, like a golden aureole, gleams a starry diadem.

From gliding gondolas belated revellers look up in amaze and cross themselves, deeming that they behold the Madonna.

OKA SAN

Honourable Little Mother

Elaborately robed, a dainty doll,
In flowing Kimono and Obi square,
Fantastically coiffed, her lustrous hair
Crowned by a gem-encrusted aureole.
A babe, with mouth agape, like some small troll,
Bestrides her bended back with little care,
As on her wooden clogs she patters here and there,
Beneath a stork-emblazoned parasol.

Dream-painted butterfly on golden wing
She seems, this elfin fluttering dame,
Or some more exquisite and sacred thing,
A Raphael rare, stepped from an altar-frame
This Eastern-world Madonna, slim and mild
Child-Mother with her heavy clinging child.

CHAPTER VIII

THE THREE DEVILS

I

THE BUCCANEERS

A pirate bold of a galleon old
In the trough of the tropic sea,
With a swarthy crew aroam for loot,
A buccaneer and a ruthless brute,
Is the lawless life for me.

Chorus:

With a yo, ho, ho! and a brandished blade

Here's a toast to the jolly rover!
A braver lad ne'er bussed a maid
Than he, the wide world over.

As we plunder ingots of sunken gold,
And drink of the life so free
Of a pirate bold on a galleon old,
In the trough of the tropic sea,

Chorus:

After BERTON BRALEY

THE Pirate stood before me, as ugly a brute as has ere been my ill fate to encounter.

Slit eyes, lewd and suspicious, leered above his shapeless nose; the moustachios of an angry cat bristled above his cruel, sensual lips; and swine's jowls sagged in folds of fat beneath his brutal chin.

His mighty paunch girt by a leathern baldric was draped in a soiled Mandarin robe, revealing beneath its folds the boots of a samurai. In his hairy hand he brandished a bared blade.

Such was the formidable figure that met my gaze as I straightened from salute.

“Flames of Fudo! what have we here?“ he thundered. “A fugitive from justice who seeketh passage in thine honourable galleon,“ I faltered.

“Bowels of Bishamon!“ he bellowed, “thou darest to seek the ship which all men flee?“

“Is not this the galleon of Mendez Pinto?“ I demanded.

“By all the demons the junk is mine. I slaughtered its filthy crew, save Pinto whom I spared to work the guns.“

My jaw fell in consternation. “Thou art Kosenya, King of the Pirates!“ I stammered.

He laughed contemptuously.

“Thou blind puppy, thou sucking pig, what crime couldst thou commit?“

“I slew a bully in a quarrel,“ I shrugged, “and am like to slay another an thou mendest not thy manners.“

“The bantam cock can ruffle his crest,“ he grinned, “mayhap his spurs will grow.“

“Meanwhile Mate, since we are short-handed, shackle him to the captive.“

They dragged me aft, where, chained to the wheel, Pinto bent to his task, great beads of bloody sweat trickling from a gash on his forehead.

He regarded me curiously. “Methinks the devil tricked himself, when he made thee pirate,“ he smiled, noting my samurai attire.

“As pretty a pirate as thou,“ I retorted, “for if thy doublet were less tattered one might think thee a Seignior.“

“A Seignior am I in sooth,“ he bridled. “Let any say that Fernando Mendez Pinto, lord of two castles in Portugal, and erstwhile Captain of this vessel, is no gentleman and I will slit his lying tongue.“

“First let us slice the Pirate,“ I suggested suavely.

“Good!“ he cried, “thou art a lad after mine own heart. Remain with me and I will make thy fortune.“

“Prate not of fortune,“ I protested, “hut contrive some scheme whereby we may escape from this den of devils.“

“That will I,“ he assented, “but ere I go, Kosenya shall pay me well for his treachery.“

Then he told me of an isle called Calempuy, where seventeen kings had been entombed in golden sarcophagi, filled with treasure and gems innumerable.

“Thither we shall sail,“ he laughed, “to plunder this golden loot.“

After long questing we sighted the treasure isle. Through the dim dawn-mist the wind brought a scent of flowers. A parakeet winged by with a mournful screech. A purplish blur darkened the horizon, glowing slowly with the sun.

“Ylha Encantada, the Enchanted Island!“ exclaimed Pinto.

A drift of white butterflies, fluttering seaward, folded their weary wings and fell like snow-flakes on the deck.

We anchored the galleon and beached our boats on a palm-fringed strand, beyond which the temple walls glinted jasper and jade in the shimmering sunlight; then plunged into a dusky forest where mossy creepers trailed from writhen limbs and wan, white orchids out-stretched their beckoning fingers. Myriad birds of lustrous plumage chanted within the bosky gloom, and winged from palm to palm like flying flames. Monkeys stoned us with cocoanuts and scurried chattering to the tree-tops.

At length we came to a goodly avenue guarded by great green monsters leading to the golden temple.

Its dim interior gleamed with gold and gems through rifts of drifting incense. We fell to our ruthless task, rifling the shrines and looting tombs, tearing tiaras, crowns, and necklaces from the mummied bodies till we had laden the boats to the gunwale.

Returning for a last foray a blare of pipes and cymbals smote upon our ears, as a wedding procession wended to the temple.

On seeing us the bridegroom advanced and greeted Kosenya courteously. Behind him stood the bride, smiling timidly and clasping a rude doll, in token that her child-life was ended.

Drawn by her beauty I ran to the little bride: "Ware thee!" I whispered, intent to save her from Kosenya.

Tossing me an azalea blossom: "My name," she smiled winsomely.

Suddenly, without warning, Kosenya discharged his pistol in the face of the bridegroom, who fell wounded to the death. A volley rang from his followers, as the amazed Koreans sprang upon us with spears and axes.

Thinking to bear her to safety I caught up the bride; but, misinterpreting my action, the frantic natives tore her from my arms.

Back to the beach they drove us inch by inch. A lance bit my shoulder and my temple bled from a slingshot.

Grasping the gunwale of a boat I strove to push off, but a burly Korean tripped me and I fell heavily to the strand.

Kosenya and his cut-throats with arquebus, pistol, and cutlass, charged in a demoniac onrush. Yelling and cursing they slashed, hacked, and thrust, fighting the Koreans into the sea.

As I staggered blindly to my feet all was a chaos of naked writhing men. Mistaking me for a native a pirate gripped my throat in an iron vise. After a mighty tussle I threw him off and, plunging into the sea, struck out blindly for Pinto's voice. Then darkness fell over me till a hand drew me from the water.

"Did the maid win free?" I demanded eagerly.

Pinto shook his head sorrowfully. "She might have escaped had she not clung to her husband's body, but Kosenya bore her to the ship and flung her senseless into his cabin."

Drunk with sake the crew fell to singing and capering like maniacs. In sooth there were but three sober men upon the ship; Pinto, a little lascar, and myself.

The galleon rode before a light breeze over a satin sea. One by one the pirates sank into sodden slumber.

Suddenly a heartrending scream broke the stillness. Little deeming the fate that lurked in the silent shadows Kosenya came from the cabin. Going to the mast he took down the cat-o'-nine tails with which he was wont to lash mutinous sailors.

My head swam as I realized that he would flog the maid into submission.

With a bound I was upon him and drove my dirk through his flabby throat.

Groaning piteously he sank in a huddled heap. Seizing his pistols I dragged him to the bulwarks and flung him headlong in the sea.

“Azalea,“ I cried, “thou art free,“ but she gave no answer.

Covering the lascar with a pistol I commanded him to unshackle Pinto, who cried out in amaze:

“Where is Kosenya?“

“In the depths of hell,“ I muttered, whereat he flung his arms about me and laughed like a child.

II

MY STAR

Surpassing fair she seemed, the light of a lantern glinting upon the bridal tiara crowning her blue-black hair.

A trustful smile gleamed from her fawn-like eyes and a faint flush flooded her cheeks, as she sank upon her knees pressing her forehead to the floor:

“August Lord, thou didst slay that monster,“ she murmured. “Forever shall I be thine humble slave.“

“Nay, thou shalt be my little daughter,“ I smiled, enraptured by her elfin beauty. She was but a mere child, exquisite as a humming-bird, in her dainty broidered robes and jewelled ornaments.

When I proposed returning to her own country she shook her head with a wistful smile which I could not fathom.

She pattered about the ship the spoiled pet of all on board. Even gruff Pinto returned from the forests, his arms laden with orchids which he suspended in cocoanut shells from the cabin roof, making a bower of beauty.

In the evening she would sing ditties to the accompaniment of a koto, 'neath the flowery tropic starlight.

The flower of the sky is the Star
That blooms in the garden of Night.
The star of the earth is a Flower
That flames ever fragrant and bright.

But when with the dawn skies grow clear,
And fadeth the flower of the sky,
The Star of the earth drops a tear
Of the dew from its sorrowful eye.
BANSUI TSUCHIO.

"Little Flower," I smiled, "soon shall we come to Nippon, mine own land!"

"The land of my Star is mine!" she echoed.

"Flower of my Heart," I laughed, "we will drink the nuptial sake; for with all my soul I love thee."

With the dawn we anchored 'neath the green-clad hills of Oita.

Here I fell in with an old friend, the youthful daimio Odo Nobunaga, who was afterward to stand us in good stead. He listened eagerly to my converse but little answered, concealing a mort of shrewdness behind his little, slanted eyes. Much he marvelled at our firearms for ne'er before had he witnessed the might of gunpowder.

When, upon a hunt, I despatched a wild boar he was filled with admiration; and his delight knew no bounds as I courteously presented him with my arquebus. Methinks he foresaw how by that same "Devil's Dust" he would one day overcome the Fighting Monks. But of this in due time. Suffice it to recount that he purchased our cargo for many times its value, paying therefor in good gold bullion.

Longing for Azalea I took my leave and hastened to the harbour.

A vague foreboding oppressed me as I noted that the crew were already hoisting sail.

I sprang into a sampan urging the boatman to his utmost. By dint of great effort we breasted the breakers and gained the ship. Catching a rope I swung myself to the deck, only to be confronted by the threatening gun of Kosenya.

The arquebus blazed! The flash scorched my eyes, a ball grazed my scalp, and I fell unconscious on the deck.

A sharp lash of the cat brought me to my senses, as, my wrists triced to the mast, I winced under the ruthless blows of the Pirate.

"So, thou didst think to slay me," he laughed, "to steal my ship and my mistress!" — driving home each word with a lash. "Ne'er shalt thou behold her more, for I sold her to a tea-house!"

Pinto lay bleeding in the scuppers, bound hand and foot and gagged with a thole-pin. Kosenya kicked him into unconsciousness and only refrained from killing me for the pleasure of seeing me suffer.

This living death dragged on for days. Taunted, flogged, starved, I suffered the tortures of the damned. Nor was my physical suffering to be compared with the mental anguish which ceaselessly beset me. Day and night I was haunted by the eyes of Azalea looking upon me with pitiful reproach. My heart was rent with fear lest she had suffered some nameless fate, and my conscience lashed me with

whips of remorse. I longed to grip Kosenya by the throat and wrest his evil soul from his loathsome body; but the Pirate read my purpose in my eyes and stood ever on his guard.

It was the lull between Monsoon and Trades.

The heat became intense. There was no wind. The sails drooped limply from the spars. The sea shone in blinding calm.

Drop by drop the water dwindled, till we were driven to slake our thirst with the death-giving brine.

Then broke out a deadly pestilence, spreading like wild-fire through the death-doomed ship. One by one the plague-stricken mariners perished and we gave them to the sea.

Pinto lingered between life and death murmuring paternosters. Kosenya lay in his cabin swearing oaths foul and blasphemous.

At last I was stricken. Barbs darted through every nerve of my body. My throat was a raging furnace, my brain a flaming Bedlam. I lay on the deck shivering and burning by turns, watching sharp-finned sharks disporting in the green and purple sea. Then delirium fell upon me. I fell down an unfathomable gulf, down, down, unendingly. I dreamed that the eternal waters closed above me and prisoned me in hell.

It seemed to my disordered fancy that the spirit of Azalea rose from the deep in flaming vestments and called me to her rescue. A great gulf of fire yawned between us, across which, upon a bridge of burning coals I ran.

Of a sudden beneath my naked feet the fiery embers became as the velvet petals of a dew-sprent rose. The leaping flames were transformed to fragile lilies, through whose fragrant bloom Azalea peered with a smile of celestial peace, murmuring tenderly:

> “Through death to life; through bitter strife to love unutterable; through winter night to ceaseless light and bliss beyond believing.“

I dreamed that she had gone the unknown way, whence there is no returning.

Francis Xavier



“Within his eyes abides celestial light“
Portrait from an oil painting, made in 1552, in the church of Born Jesus, Goa
(“Arabia, Egypt and India,“ by Isabella Burton)



“A shot rang out as Nobunaga galloped to our rescue“
(Hokusai)

MY STAR

She walks the high, untrodden ways
Where dwelleth all delight.
Fair as a star her lovesome face
A-gleam upon the night.

Tier petaled lips like roses were.
Smiles blossomed in her eye,
A breath of music followed her
As she fled swiftly by.

Since when in loneliness I wait,
Unwitting how or why;
And knock upon the door of fate
'Neath a relentless sky.

But ne'er again her starry grace
Will greet my eager sight;
She walks the high, untrodden ways,
Where dwelleth all delight!

Then all was still save for the babbling of a hidden brook whose welcome waters laved my brow with cool, refreshing streams.

The rain, the blessed rain had come!

I drew in deep breaths of healing and slept the sleep of a child.

With sunrise the storm ceased. A sapphire sky gleamed through swirling draperies of mist. A light breeze had arisen, but there was none to hoist the sagging sails.

Presently I heard a rhythmic beat of oars throbbing nearer and nearer, then voices raised in altercation:

"Go not on board, Father, I beseech thee, the ship is accursed!"

“I follow my Master who descended even into hell to seek and to save,“ replied a resolute voice.

A calm, angelic face bent over me, a strong but gentle hand caressed my brow; and yet I knew that it was no vision, for my delirium was past though I was still so spent I scarce could speak.

With what little strength I could muster I warned him: “Touch me not, Father, for I am stricken of the plague!“

“Nay,“ the priest protested, “the Lord hath called thee to new life, for the former things have passed away.“

III

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

Francis Xavier

Out of life‘s dread and melancholy gloom,
Like falling star-dust in the silent night
Lighting its darksome vasts for our delight,
Springeth a stainless flower of perfect bloom.
The glint of dawn is on his knightly plume,
Within his eyes abides celestial light,
His lips breathe Faith, seen with eternal sight
That fears not death nor dust of earthly tomb,

Nor doubt nor pain he knows, nor vain desire.
Scorning life‘s little lusts, his spirit free
Treadeth ethereal pathways passionless,
Greeting the unseen goal with fearlessness,
His heart a quenchless flame of living fire,
Lit from the altar of eternity.

Again I slept, how long I know not, and waking gazed about me in amaze. I lay in a sunny, white-walled chamber, through whose open archways I caught a glimpse of a palm-shaded cloister. A line of snow-white pallets stretched away in endless vista, and black-robed monks, with noiseless tread, ministered gently to my needs.

It was the hospice of Malacca, built upon a rock-bound islet for the succour of the shipwrecked.

Here, like an angel of mercy, there came to me each morning the blessed Father Francis. To the tenderness of a maiden he united the valour of a knight. Like a young staghound he was spare and clean of limb. Slender, strong, and wiry, a stranger to sloth and ease. The little lusts of life for him had no appeal. The pomp of courts, delusions of wine, witchery of women, delights of the table all were naught. Only the vision of the spirit realized in service was to him the very breath of life.

His thin, firm lips and placid, lofty brow proclaimed the anchorite; but the flaming eyes and square-cut jaw betokened a relentless will that knew neither fear nor defeat.

To him I confessed my broken life and great dismay. With loving patience he comforted me, promising forgiveness through repentance.

I confided my love for Azalea; how she had loved and trusted me, and told him how my unwitting negligence had compassed her ruin.

"All manner of sin shall be forgiven," he murmured, "but whoso shall cause one of my little ones to perish it were better for him that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.

“Thou shalt find her,“ he promised “and lead her to the light. Thou hast won me for Japan, even as I have won thee for Christ. Thither thou shalt lead me, and together we shall teach.“

After passing my novitiate in the Jesuit College at Goa I took the vow and became a priest.

Kosenya, hypocrite to the core, simulated repentance and became a Franciscan friar, thereafter known as Brother Jude.

One spring morning Pinto came to us with the glad tidings that he was ready to sail, and laden with a cargo of cotton fabrics and leather we embarked for Nippon.

SPRING

The Spring bath come but still Yamato bears
Her ermine mantle of the stainless snow,
Heaven send us soon the breath of zephyrs low
To melt the nightingale‘s melodious tears!
ANON.

The coast gleamed purple and white beneath its wintry burden. A veil of amethyst shrouded the ancient cliffs, down whose beetling foreheads trickled thin streams of light. The morning sun embroidered their velvet shadows with a myriad glittering jewels. Across the silken sea a toy-like town gleamed, like a willow plate, with tiny streaks of white and blue against mist-wreathed mountains of porphyry and pearl.

My heart swelled with the bursting buds, for somewhere in this flowery isle waited Azalea. Tears of hope welled to my eyes and my lips sang a song of

EXPECTANCY

Heaven spreadeth o'er the world her iris bow:
The teeming womb of all-prolific Earth
Is quick with trembling life and promised birth;
From Fujyma's crest now melts the snow
And frost-bound streams in joyance overflow;
The verduring valleys lose all trace of dearth,
The bright plum-blossoms leap in madcap mirth,
And from the memory fades all sense of woe.

How many days must pass ere first we go
To cull the cowslip in the dewy mead;
And, while the nightingales their nocturnes sing,
Shall stray together where the cherries blow?
These are the dreams our fertile fancies breed,
When to a heart expectant cometh Spring!
KEICHIU.

From town to town I wandered with Father Francis in fruitless quest of Azalea. At last I found a clue: the keeper of a tea-house told me of a Korean geisha, who sang this song:

"And from the memory fades all sense of woe
When to a heart expectant cometh spring!"

Then I knew that this was none other than Azalea. But alas! he had sold her and she had gone he knew not whither.

These tidings rent my heart and well-nigh drove me mad. But Father Francis sustained me in the faith that we would find her.

"Let us forth!" he cried, "for truly I believe the Master will reward his husbandmen."

As we were nearing the outskirts of Kioto a band of Buddhist bonzes trudged sullenly by.

Black looks they flung us and blacker oaths, nor was this the worst, for of a sudden from behind a hedge a volley of shots blazed forth.

Our coolies took to their heels in consternation as Father Francis fell wounded at my feet.

Leaping from ambuscade three burly ruffians sprang suddenly upon me. I had no weapon but my pilgrim's staff, but this I let fly so lustily about their heads that the caitiffs drew off apace.

Their leader paused at a little distance and hastily reloading his arquebus sighted it upon me.

Though cloaked and cowled methought I recognized the malevolent features of Brother Jude.

Suddenly a shot rang out, the gun dropped from his hand, and he fled shrieking to the forest as a troop of samurai galloped to our rescue.

Then all was a chaos of plunging steeds and clashing blades.

Having pursued the fleeing bonzes to the forest, where he was unable to penetrate the undergrowth, the leader of the samurai rode up to us and courteously demanded if we had suffered scathe.

"By the Ship of Good Fortune," he cried, "it is Anjiro! The arquebus thou didst give me hath served thee in good stead!"

With delight I recognized the youthful daimio Oda Nobunaga.

"Of late the monks have grown arrogant beyond endurance," he flared indignantly. "There are three things I can scarce control: the throw of the dice, the waters of the Kamagawa and the monks of Hiei-zan! But I will humble their pride.

“Noble Seignior,“ I proffered, “mayhap it is in my power to aid thee.“

“How?“ demanded Nobunaga eagerly. “Hast thou brought the Devil Dust wherewith we may send them to Hell?“

“Nay,“ protested Father Francis, “we bring the peace of God which leadeth unto Heaven.“

“Bah! Religion!“ he scoffed, “I would liefer have a vat of Devil‘s Dust than all thy paternosters.“

“That will I give thee!“ I cried, “for I alone possess the secret formula.“

IV

THE CLOISTERED LIFE

Summer

The first bright clusters of wistaria sway
Their fragile tassels o‘er the plashing nil
As comes a lone wild cuckoo from the hill
To thrill my heart with his melodious lay.
HITOMARO.

The days were bright and balmy, a riot of ceaseless sunshine and cloudless azure skies. From a thousand arbours, purple and white wistaria drooped graceful clusters over brook and pool. Pale pink lotus buds peered shyly forth from great green spatulas, and timid cuckoos quitted wood and mountain to wake the meadows with melodious song.

But my heart was sad with vain longing, for despite incessant questing I could not find Azalea.

Night and day Father Francis toiled throughout the streets of Kioto to seek and to save.

In teeming marts and before tea-houses in the "Flower Quarter," he lifted up his voice in supplication:

"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest."

From a balcony where a group of glittering geisha postured to the tinkling samisen, a heart-sick Magdalen came and threw herself weeping at his feet.

Little deeming to whom he spake, Father Francis told her the story of that Mary of the long ago:

"Thy sins," he said, "are forgiven, for thou hast loved much," and lifting his hand in blessing, bade her gently, ''Go and sin no more."

White with anger the owner of the tea-house rushed forth and grasping the trembling girl thrust her brutally within.

Towering to his full height, his eyes blazing with divine wrath, Father Francis cried: "Renegade, open thy doors and let the girl go free! Else shalt thou burn forever in eternal fire!"

Cowering before the dauntless apostle the panderer unbarred.

Revenge fired my heart as I recognized Brother Jude.

"Traitor!" I cried, leaping through the doorway into a gilded banquet-hall.

Clatter of cups, tinkle of samisens, mad laughter, and swish of silken draperies flooded the chamber. Flitting, lancing maidens poured hot sake for drunken guests, while Brother Jude leered motionless and malevolent upon Azalea cowering in terror at his feet.



"Brother Jude, motionless and malevolent, leered upon Azalea cowering in terror at his feet"
(Hokusai)



"Many a lovesome evening did we beguile with lute and psaltery"
(Hokusai)

Snatching a sword from the tokonoma, I swept aside the bystanders and rushed upon him.

"Let me pass," I shouted while the noisy crowd grew mute.

A sudden slash was his only answer.

I parried and thrust, fencing warily, waiting carefully for an opening. His prowess was well known to the company and they thought to see him spit me at the first onset.

As this expectation was deferred they watched each stroke with bated breath, as steel clashed against steel till sparks flashed from our whirling blades.

Slowly the leer faded from his face and a grim foreboding glazed his shifty eyes. He tried one form of attack after another, for he had mastered all the tricks of Japanese swordsmanship. But he had found

his match at last, and knew it. I had learned the Portuguese style of fencing, and my mode of attack bewildered him, for I used the point as readily as the blade.

A tricky feint of his roused my wrath and, forgetting all restraint, I lunged with renewed vigour.

Sweat stood in great beads on his forehead and his breath came in short laboured gasps.

I would not let him breathe but pressed him more and more mercilessly.

Fear glared from his blank protruding eyes.

At last his nerveless fingers relaxed their grip, and, with a sudden parry, I sent his sword flying into the crowd.

A shout from the onlookers acclaimed my victory.

As the caitiff shrank back Covering his face with his hands, I stood unable to strike the death-blow, for a voice rang out:

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.“ Father Francis stepped between:

“Go, Jude!“ he cried, “but beware to cross my path again.“

He stayed not for a second bidding but bounded through the doorway like a frightened cur.

Father Francis smiled upon me reproachfully:

“My Son, I fear ‘the sword of the spirit‘ hath not yet replaced thy sword of steel.“

Ne'er was sinner more devoutly penitent than Azalea. She had been caught in the toils like some poor bird. She had tasted of the cup of pleasure and had found it gall.

My heart was filled with a divine joy. I loved her with an affection in which was mingled no unworthy earthly thought. Her presence glorified the dawn and I blessed the tranquil evening. These halcyon days were very near to Heaven.

We journeyed to Hikone, seeking the protection of Nobunaga; who received us with warm hospitality, converting his castle into a chapel and rearing thereon the cross.

Many a lovesome evening did we beguile with lute and psaltery. Azalea was beloved by all, more especially by the children who trooped about her like a brood of pheasants.

"Thou shalt minister to the little ones," said Father Francis. "The motherless shall find in thee a mother."

Autumn

The pearly dewdrops gleam beneath the night
Translucent, pale, and pure, like crystals white,
Then tell me, gentle jewels, truly why,
Your crystal dews, with such alluring hues

Blazon the gold brocade of autumn bright?

TOSHIYUKI.

Sleep had fallen on the silent forest. The ancient firs towered hoar and holy in the misty moonlight. The flaming tapestry of oak and maple faded to faint brocade of russet rose. Dew dripped from the lacquered branches, streaming in strands of silver down their mossy stems. The velvet shadows gleamed with a myriad lustrous pearls. Silent and sinister loomed the slumbering forest, august, mysterious as death.

Beneath the moonlight we repeated to one another a joyous litany of love:

“Amo te carل,“ I murmured.

“Amo te,“ she echoed with fluttering lids.

“Semper me amabis?“ she questioned shyly.

“Semper, ci solo te,“ I vowed.

But, like an unproved knight, I was over-confident in my strength.

“Azalea,“ I cried, “I love thee body and soul. God hath made me man and thee woman. Thou dost love me. Thou canst not forswear thyself, my Heart, my Love, my Life!“

She drew back suddenly and buried her face in her hands.

Then it came over me that she shrank not in shame but with the sorrow a mother feels for a wayward child.

“Am I then so base,“ she flared, “that I lure thee to sin? Nay, Anjiro, thou hast given thyself to me, I give thee back to Christ!“

“Soul of my Life,“ I pleaded, “for me there is no I leaven save thy love!“

“Thou wouldst love me not,“ she chided gently, “should I yield to thy desire.“

And in my inmost self I knew that she spake sooth.

“I have lost all, all,“ I moaned. “Christ have pity on me!‘‘

Clasping her hands in prayer she whispered, “Grieve not, Beloved, he will take thee to his heart.“

Beyond the tranquil blue of Lake Biwa loomed a mighty mountain upon whose beetling cliffs frowned he monastery of the warrior monks of Hiei-zan.

From his fortress of Hikone the Regent frowned back, angered by their surly insolence.

“They roar through the city,“ cried Nobunaga, “like the Kamagawa in flood. ‘Twas all my guards could do to beat me passage with the flat of their swords. Belike soon these lawless knaves shall feel the blade.“

“Aye, Master,“ I assented. “Time is to burn this nest of hornets.“

“Even now,“ he answered, “go I to take counsel with the Emperor, for they threaten to burn his palace else he yield them ransom.“

One evening, as I moored my boat and mounted to the castle, there broke from the forest such a flood of melody that I was smitten with foreboding.

It was the sad, sweet song of

The Uguisu

Like silent samurai the cedars loom,
Lifting their serried lances to the light,
About the moonlit pool where iris white,
Wan little ghosts in shadowland a-bloom
And lotus pale the fragrant dusk perfume;
While from the forest near with fond delight
The nightingale pours forth unto the night
Its love-sweet ecstasy of joyous doom.
Elusive sound-flowers, waning fast to death
Like wind-blown blossoms in the sunless sky,
Brief as an evanescent thought, an idle breath;
Thus vanisheth life‘s summer-dream of vain delight:
A little gleam of love, of beauty, bliss,

Then endless darkness blind as winter night.

Suddenly from the shadow of the cedars a cowled figure advanced to meet me. He lifted his hand in blessing and I recognized Father Francis. He gazed upon me with a look of such infinite sympathy that I trembled ere he spake.

“My Son, “ he faltered, “strengthen thine heart to bear a great sorrow. Azalea—“

“Tell me not,“ I implored, “that she is dead!“

“Not dead, but lost,“ he answered sadly. “Seeking her at the chapel I found the children weeping instead of playing as is their wont. Then they told me the ill tidings that Azalea had been carried away by a band of horsemen.“

“This is Jude‘s work,“ I cried, and ran to the stables.

As I sprang to saddle, Father Francis gave me a sword:

“The time bath come, my Son, to gird the sword of steel!“

When I reached the “Flower Quarter“ to my astonishment I found the tea-house deserted. The great doors of the banquet-hall were barred. The firefly lanterns swung no longer from the eaves. As I paced to and fro in bewilderment I perceived, upon the pavement, ,i little golden flower, a fragment from the tiara of Azalea.

I crossed the street. A faint light flickered through the shoji. Suddenly a woman‘s shadow flitted across and I heard the plaintive murmur of a lute.

Aglow with hope I threw wide the shutters and made my way into the dim interior. Softly I tiptoed from one deserted chamber to another, whither I knew not, in fruitless quest of my beloved.

Of a sudden the earth yawned beneath me and I fell. Down, down I hurtled, through fathoms of pitchy darkness, as it seemed a lifetime, till I landed, bruised and bleeding, in the noisome slime of a cistern, an *oubliette* where many a wretch had been cast to rot in filth and darkness.

How long I lingered there I know not, save that at last I was awakened by a clamour of voices.

A lantern was lowered and I discerned, peering down upon me, a ring of ghostly faces. A gruff voice bade me grasp a rope and I was drawn, spent but exultant, to the light of day.

Then the slit eyes of Jude leered upon me in malevolent triumph, and I knew my hour had come!

V

DEVIL'S DUST

"So my bait lured thee," laughed Jude, "this should teach thee that the way of sinners leadeth to hell!"

"Have a care, Hypocrite," I cried, "thine insolence will not go unpunished."

"Look not to Nobunaga for aid," he muttered; "soon shalt thou be beyond his power. Meanwhile, keep a civil tongue in thy head lest it be torn from thy caitiff throat."

Whereupon his minions bound, gagged, and cast me helpless into a bullock-cart, and, covering me with straw, lumbered from the city.

At the barrier I heard a samurai bid the wardens keep careful watch in quest of a certain Krishitan priest whom the Buddhist bonzes had secretly spirited away.

Whereat the guard prodded the straw with his halberd, but, strive as I might, I could make no outcry.

Then he turned to interrogate a band of monks, and Jude lashing the bullocks, we jolted on our way.

I heard the laughter of the bonzes as they overtook us, and learned that they were bearing me to the Monastery of Hiei-zan.

The roads were a quagmire of pools and ruts, and so shaken was I by my fall that I feared each jolt would be my last. After hours of tedious plodding the bullocks halted, I heard the clang of portcullis, a rattle of bolts and screaming of hinges; the cart jolted a pace or two farther then, heaving out its load of straw, I tumbled suddenly forth.

Massy walls frowned on every hand, a great keep towering black against the rising sun. Stern, mailed warriors scowled down upon me from tile-roofed parapets. It was the fortress of Hiei-Zan.

“So this is the knave who hath the secret,“ blurted the truculent Abbot. “Verily there are three devils:

Gunpowder, Christianity, and the Portuguese, and in the first only have I faith. Therefore deliver to us thy formula.“

“Nay, of thy courtesy, gentle Sir, I have it not,“ I asseverated truly.

“Hast searched the lying rogue ?“ demanded the Abbot unconvinced.“

“Of a surety,“ shrugged Brother Jude, “but found naught.“

“Trouble me then no further, but behead him forthwith!“

“Nay, reverend Father,“ protested the other, “let not the secret perish with him. Perchance, an he willeth, he may recall the formula to his mind.“

“Lead him to the torture-chamber,“ smiled the Abbot. “Twill jog his flagging memory.“

I eyed my inquisitors calmly. They were men who knew neither pity nor remorse, but I vowed within my heart that neither rack nor crucifixion should wrest from me my secret.

Lighting a link from a cresset, Jude led me down a slimy stairway to the bowels of the fortress, where, unbolting an iron-studded door, he thrust me into a vaulted dungeon.

A fire glowed in a furnace, the floor was littered with crucibles, and the air reeked with noisome stenches.

For days I laboured in this inferno, sleeping on the dank earth, nor ever passing that bolt-studded door.

I had hoped to gain time by a pretence that I was wildered in my wits, but Jude fathomed that subterfuge and flogged me piteously.

This only served to rouse my spirit. Each lash the malefactors rained on my bleeding shoulders strengthened my resolve never to reveal my precious secret.

As my torturers heated their irons at the forge, a battle-hymn of the spirit rang within my ears, heartening my courage to endure.

The Sword of the Soul

Forged in the furnace flame of Life
The sword-blade gleameth white,
Beneath the bludgeonings of strife
Reverberant and bright.

The stern artificer of years
Tempers youth‘s ardent fires,
Within Truth‘s well of joy and tears,
Made free from base desires.

Thus shall our souls, through slow anneal,
Within Fate's furnace cast,
Beneath Time's tireless sledge reveal
Life's flawless steel at last.

Each day I suffered a fresh ordeal: lashed, burned, and racked until I prayed that death might end my misery.

Meanwhile Jude strove feverishly to fabricate the Devil's Dust, mingling various compounds of sulphur and saltpetre, in a vain hope of discovering the secret.

One day a youth entered bearing a pannier of charcoal, which he threw carelessly upon the floor.

Jude glared in astonishment at the black dust, struck by its resemblance to gunpowder. Of a sudden the conviction dawned upon him that this was the missing ingredient.

Clutching a handful, he flung it into the mortar and pounded furiously. A blinding flash illumined the laboratory, shaking the walls and filling the chamber with a smother of lurid smoke.

Scorched and blackened, frantic with fiendish delight, Jude danced and sang like a raving maniac. He had found the secret formula!

Nor was I ungrateful for his discovery. My torture was ended, though now, I thought, in all likelihood will he slay me since I am no longer of use.

But in this I was mistaken. Commanding me to store the powder in a vault outside the monastery walls, he committed to me the task of excavation.

The course of this subterranean gallery lay beneath the gate-tower. I could hear the guard laughing and singing above me as I worked, and determined upon my plan of escape.

Day and night I descended and, little by little, dug a tunnel to a grove on the shore of the lake.

Many weary days I laboured thus, scarce stopping to sleep or eat. Having no sure means of judging the distance I delved on until I encountered a thick tangle of roots; then burrowing upwards to the air, I beheld with delight the full moon shining through the pines.

I turned to cast a last glance behind, when suddenly, at a barred window in the topmost tower, I saw Azalea. Well it was I had not known this before, else should I have gone mad, for I could not have rescued her, nor could I now without an army at my back. But I thought of Nobunaga and laughed aloud as I planned a means for her deliverance.

Hastening back to the magazine I emptied sack after sack of gunpowder beneath the gate-tower and laid a fuse therefrom along my secret tunnel to the outlet; then sped through the forest to the lake.

A lone fisherman with a flock of cormorants was plying his curious craft. Drawing in his greedy fowls he gave me an oar, and in the misty moonlight we sculled silently across the lake.

The mighty castle of Hikone bristled with warriors, and the broad champaign teemed with a myriad horsemen eager for the fray. Nobunaga was rejoiced beyond measure at my miraculous deliverance.

I told him of Azalea's imprisonment, and of my plan to capture Hiei-zan.

"Go back," he commanded, "burst asunder the gates. At dawn I will attack the fortress!"

Disguised as a fisherman I oared across the lake, crept through the wood, and came to the hidden way. To my consternation the tunnel was blocked by a pile of stones!

I believed my plan foiled, until after many moments of digging I found the fuse undisturbed.

Striking a flint I ignited the end, and a fiery serpent hissed swiftly along the ground.

Suddenly the barbican rose in a blinding shaft of fire, with a shock that seemed to shatter the universe, and a pall of soot-black clouds shrouded the sky.

Then a great bell boomed. Shrieks of terror rang from the panic-stricken monks as the samurai of Nobunaga rushed to the assault. Through the smouldering ruins of the barbican burst the mailed warriors thrusting with pike and halberd, slashing with sword and axe; while, heedless of the foe, in flaming vestments the half-burned inmates staggered blindly forth and fell writhing upon the ground.

Warrior-monks poured from archways and shot from arrow-slits. For a space they fought desperately, then, overpowered by the ever-increasing numbers, fled up burning stairways through toppling galleries, out upon the battlements whence they leapt, only to be dashed in fragments upon the stones.

Foremost in the panic-stricken mob I caught sight of Jude fleeing for his cowardly life, leaving Azalea imprisoned a prey to the relentless flames.

And ever the merciless samurai of Nobunaga poured ceaselessly in, putting all to sword and flame. Through underground burrows they ferreted their fleeing foes, slaughtering them like rats in their holes.

Of a sudden, at a loop-hole in the topmost tower, her arms outstretched in appeal, I beheld Azalea, wreathed in a ring of flames.

I leaped over the smoking threshold into the blazing furnace. Up the burning stairway I hurried till I came to a bolted door.

"Azalea," I cried. "Unbar; 'tis I, Anjiro."

But she gave no answer.

Putting forth all my strength I wrenched the door from, its hinges, as the stairway crumpled behind me and was swallowed in a well of fire.

With a joyous cry I lifted Azalea in my arms and ran with her to the window.

Seizing the lattice I wrenched it from its fastenings; and grasping Azalea by the wrists lowered her until her feet touched the tile roof of the story below. Then, using the window-lattice as a ladder, I climbed cautiously down.

A cheer rang out as the samurai of Nobunaga watched us from the court.

The tower terraced beneath us, each roof of its seven nones jutting out beyond the one above. My ladder was just long enough to reach from one gable to the next. Along the tiles we crept, clambering down the ladder, from eave to eave, until we reached the lowest cornice.

Below us yawned a sheer wall of masonry full fifty feet above the court!

I paused aghast, to leap would be certain death! But even as I hesitated a tongue of flame lapped the parapet.

Clasping her hands about my neck, Azalea buried her face in my bosom:

"Leap!" she cried, "into the great unknown." Raising her above me, I leaped backward that my body might break the shock of her fall.

But lo! 'Twas not to death.

We lay cradled safely in a net, which the samurai of Nobunaga held beneath us. Their cheers rent the air as the great keep toppled suddenly in, throwing up a volcano of flame into the very heavens.

VI

THE BETRAYAL

First wee snowflakes white
On the lily lending,
Their frail freight so light
Scarce its petals bending.

Thus musing, I culled a lily for the altar; then, glancing at the belfry, noted that the lantern was not displayed, and, seeking the old sexton, I reproached him for his remissness.

"Father," he pleaded, "strange rumours are abroad. 'Tis said the cruel Hideyoshi hath come to enforce his edict against the Christians. Shall I light the wolf to the sheepfold?"

"Our Shepherd will care for his flock," I answered, as with shaking fingers he set the tapers aglow.

A step rang upon the pavement and I beheld a man cloaked in a fisherman's straw raincoat who entered the chapel and disappeared within a confessional. Pondering who this stranger-penitent might be I followed and knelt within the curtained alcove.

"My Son," I asked, "hast thou some secret sin whereof thou wouldst ease thy conscience?"

"Sins a-plenty," he replied, "but not that of deserting a friend in peril."

Then with a thrill of pleasure I recognized the voice of Pinto.

"Come forth, Sinner," I cried, "that I may embrace thee!"

“By your leave we will deem embraces exchanged, and bide in hiding,“ he whispered cautiously.

“Art thou in peril, Friend?“ I questioned.

“Nay, Anjiro, ‘tis thee I have come to warn. Jude came on board my ship today and offered to betray to me the citadel of Nagasaki. He maintained that thou wast in the plot; but well I knew he lied. I kicked him from my deck as a scurvy traitor, and have it upon my conscience that I slew him not.“

“Tis like the rogue,“ I mused, “but how can this avail since his plot hath failed?“

“Listen, Friend,“ he resumed, “Hideyoshi hath commanded all Christians to leave Japan on pain of death. There are but two courses: to fight or flee; in which shall I aid thee?“

“In neither, faithful comrade,“ I made answer.

“I must not desert my flock. I will betray neither my country nor Christ.“

“Nay, ‘tis not betrayal,“ he persisted. “Come with me until this peril be overpast. I will wait by the lighthouse of Hirado until the morrow.“

I wrung his hand warmly but shook my head.

“Fool,“ he muttered, yet methought with kindly feeling, “thou shalt still have thy day of grace,“ and was gone.

“My day of grace!“ I echoed, falling upon my knees.

“Merciful Father, let me not fail!“

Of a sudden I discerned the clank of arms, tread of mailed feet, and roar of wrathful voices. Up the toilsome path trailed a troop of grim samurai, their footsteps dogged by a flock of Christians shaking clenched fists and muttering anathemas.

A skulking form darted swiftly forward and thrust a parchment into the hand of the officer:

“Proof, Captain,“ he hissed, “damning proof! Mark the red light within the belfry. Take him to Hideyoshi, his guilt is clear!“

“Judas!“ I cried, “thou traitor, wouldst seek to shoulder thy crime upon the innocent?“

He made no answer save a smiling shrug, as the samurai pinioned my arms and led me forth.

The tidings sped like flame. My faithful converts flocked around me by scores, kneeling to kiss my robe. Youths hurled stones and imprecations. Women wailed and beat their breasts. Thus they attended me to the citadel where the samurai clanged the brazen gates in their faces as they thrust me into a dungeon.

Fleeting Life

A cloudlet white as mountain snows
Blows blithely by,
And whence it comes or whither goes
It scarce knows why:

Till, like an iris aureole,
It melts in sky.
E‘en thus, man‘s soaring cloud-like soul
Is born—to die!

MINAMOTO NO JUN.

After hours of blind suspense I was at last summoned before the relentless Hideyoshi.

Flanked by two councillors he sat upon a dais, smoking unconcernedly, heeding not my presence as I knelt submissively at his feet.

At length he glared upon me with his loathly, serpent eyes.

“Thou hast not the visage of a murderer,“ he muttered. “Why have ye brought this miscreant to me? There is a lower court for thieves and vagabonds.“

“Nay, august General,“ protested the Captain, “the prisoner is accused of treason.“

“Ha! this promises well,“ smiled Hideyoshi, rapping the hibachi with his pipe. “Let the accusation be read.“

In a perfunctory tone a clerk droned the trumped-up indictment:

“Tis charged that the accused, a notorious pirate, by name Kosenya, cloaking his identity under the alias, Brother Paul of the Evil Sect, hath hatched a vile conspiracy to deliver our Heaven-descended Empire into the hands of King Philip of Spain!“

“Art thou Brother Paul of the Evil Sect?“ demanded Hideyoshi.

“By the name of Paul of the Holy Faith am I honoured,“ I answered proudly, “but I am innocent of this shameful plot;. Though a Christian I am a true son of Nippon, and would sooner suffer death than sell my country.“

“Enough,“ interrupted the General, “we have proofs. Let the scrolls be read.“

“This letter,“ explained the Captain, “was found concealed beneath the chapel altar.“ Whereupon he read:

“To the Reverend, FATHER PAUL of the Holy Faith:

“Be it known that his Majesty Philip II. King of Spain having duly considered thy petition, hath despatched me with a fleet of armed galleons, to complete the conquest of Japan, which thou hast inaugurated.

“Send runners to all thy churches. Instruct thy people to seize the arsenals and citadels. I will subdue Nagasaki, join thy insurgents in Kioto and the victory will be complete.

“As sign that thou dost consent, within the belfry of thy Church display tonight a red lantern; I will come thither that we may perfect our plans.

“(signed) FERNANDO MENDEZ-PINTO.

“Commander of the Spanish war-galleon *San Felipe,* and accredited agent of His Majesty Philip II. of Spain.“

“Permission is humbly implored,“ I besought, “to I fond myself from this false accusation.“

For answer the guard smote me in the face, bidding me hold my tongue.

Hideyoshi regarded me malevolently: “Dost thou deny knowledge of this letter and that it is the answer to thine own?‘‘

“I deny both,“ I replied firmly.

“Didst thou not signal the Spanish ship with a red lantern?“ he thundered, pointing to the belfry, where the light still glowed like a ruby star.

“I displayed the lantern to call my worshippers to midnight mass,“ I explained.

“Write that the prisoner doth admit the charge,“ commanded the General.

“Dost thou deny that thy fellow conspirator came at thy signal, and that together ye did take counsel concerning the plot?“

“This also I deny,“ I maintained stubbornly.

“Are there witnesses to this meeting?“ asked Hideyoshi.

The Captain thereupon attested that at midnight he had seen a Spanish officer leave the chapel; that his troops had pursued him to the port, but that he sprang into a sampan and escaped to his galleon.

“Write,“ commanded the General, “that the prisoner‘s denials have all been proven false.

“Summon the chief witness, the Buddhist bonze — Anjiro!“

I could scarce credit my eyes when, in answer to my name, Brother Jude strode confidently forth.

“Art thou that Anjiro, friend of my late master Odo Nobunaga?“ the General demanded.

“Even so,“ assented the traitor unabashed.

“Thou art a member of the Evil Sect?“

“Nay, august Lord, when I learned their plot to seize the Emperor through the murder of Nobunaga, I forswore their faith and entered a Buddhist monastery.“





"The artist dipped a brush, poised it between thumb and forefinger,
and with a dexterous fillip hurled it into the air"
(Hokusai)

"Write that the testimony of Anjiro is admitted to evidence," commanded Hideyoshi: "Recount further the history of the prisoner."

Whereupon Jude poured forth such a tissue of malicious lies, as made me doubt if he were not Satan incarnate. According to his tale we had completely changed characters. I, as Kosenya, was the scape-goat for his many crimes: First, I had rapt from Korea a princess whom I held as paramour. Second, I had supplied the Monastery of Hiei-zan with Devil's Dust; Third, I had betrayed Nobunaga to his assassins, and fourth, under the guise of preaching the faith, I had sown sedition throughout the land.

"I have sentenced many a man on less evidence," smiled Hideyoshi. "Though thou dost merit instant death, yet will I grant thee one last chance.

"Trample upon the cross in token thou dost abjure the evil faith and I will set thee free!"

Jude whispered something in the ear of the General.

"Nay, one more condition," cried Hideyoshi.

"Renounce forever and deliver into my hands the Korean Princess Azalea! Dost thou consent?"

"Never," I cried, "were I to suffer an hundred deaths!"

Hideyoshi's eyes flashed flame, and he muttered a string of foul imprecations. Seeing that I was not to he shaken he resumed:

"Since the criminal persists in denying his guilt, lead him to the torture-chamber! Should he confess, let him be beheaded as a political offender! If he still denies his crime, let him be crucified as a Krishitan before the eyes of his deluded converts, that, as they mark his sightless eyeballs upturned in vain entreaty to a powerless god they may take warning by his fate!"

VII

IN TUAS MANAS

Thou standest at the brink. Behind thee lie
Fair flower-decked meads and rivers of delight,
With reach of verdured hill and valley bright,
Which men call Life. Lo, now before thee nigh
Yawneth an unknown lake of dread infinity!
And, as thou cowerest there in sore affright,
Thou tremblest lest some vague, malignant might
Should thrust thee in the dark abyss to die.
Fear not, within these depths hides Mercy, Friend!
For he who wove the fabric of the wold
Bedecked the darksome pool with blossoms rare.
Plunge boldly in, nor fear the waters cold!
Life's meadows know not death nor any end
E'en the black mire is white with lilies fair.

Transcribed from *The Japan Magazine.*

Here endeth the chronicle of Brother Paul. With it I found a letter traced in the blood of his wounded hands.

To AZALEA,

Abbess of the Bleeding Heart.

BELOVED SISTER:

Hideyoshi with a band of warriors hath set fourth to sack thy convent.

Disperse thy flock and hasten to the harbour, where thou wilt find my old friend Mendez Pinto, who will convey thee in safety to Portugal.

Tarry not, but flee. On the morrow I shall have gone wither no evil may befall.

And so God give thee grace to endure till thou findest me in Paradise.

Thine ANJIRO.

Winter

When falls from out an ebon clouded sky
The snow's white petals, fluttering down in showers,
Meseems, somewhere beyond the gloom doth lie
Eternal Spring-tide, bright with festal flowers!
FUKAYABU.

The long, long night was over; in the heavens the stars were paling; a wan luminance whitened the laden sky.

A cock crew, first timidly as if in doubt as to the day, lion confidently with zestful flapping of wings. The hour was rife with rumours, a mystic undertone of vague foreboding wails. Now and again from a distant farmstead came the lowing of cows and bleat of baby lambs. The rose of dawn was bursting into flame.

Then over the purple hills rang clear and sonorous the boom of a mission bell, the Angelus of Brother Paul.

Up the steep path that mounted to the little chapel I wended my eager way. The door was open, the guttering tapers threw their feeble rays upon a formless mass.

Drawing nearer I beheld a cross, shaped like that of Saint Andrew. Upon it, lashed hand and foot, stretched a body transfixed by bloody spears.

On the wan face, uplifted to the dawn, was no trace of fear or agony, only a childlike smile, "the peace that passeth understanding."

Half buried in the snow at the martyr's feet crouched a white-faced woman, her hands clasped about the cross in an agony of despair, her glazed eyes turned heavenward in vain appeal.

I strove to raise her, but the frozen limbs refused to move.

"Azalea!" I cried repeatedly, but the wan lips gave no answer.

"In tuas manas, Domini," I murmured. "The long, long night is over. Thou hast found eternal day!"

My God, I love thee—not because
I hope for heaven thereby:
Nor yet for fear, if I love not,
I must for ever die.

But, O my Jesu, thou didst me
Upon the cross embrace;
For me didst bear the nails and spear,
And manifold disgrace,
And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony,
E'en death itself; and all for me
Who was thine enemy!

Then why, O blessed Jesu Christ,
Should I not love thee well?
Not for the hope of winning heaven
Nor of escaping hell;
Not with the hope of gaining aught
Not seeking a reward;
But as thyself hast loved me,
O ever-loving Lord!

E'en so I love thee, and will love,

And in thy praise will sing;
Solely because thou art my God,
And my eternal King.
FRANCIS XAVIER.

CHAPTER IX

THE QUEST OF LIFE

I

THE BARRED GATE

THE mighty Shogun Ieyasu lay upon his death-bed. In a sudden flash of consciousness he turned his glazing eyes upon his little grandson.

"Take,"[1] he gasped, "Heed my dying counsel. Three barbarian devils have invaded Dai Nippon: Gunpowder, Christianity, and the Portuguese. The first have I made an ally against the rest. Our land is now secure from the last, but the Evil Sect, expelled to the Spanish Isles, doth return in secret to corrupt our credulous folk. Wherefore, my child, thou must for ever bar the door."

[1]Pet name for Iemitsu

Springing to his feet, the boy swiftly closed the shoji. "Look, Grandfather," he laughed, "there is not a cranny where-through the devils may enter."

"'Tis well," approved the Shogun. "Let them ne'er be opened."

His eyes closed. A smile fluttered on his grim lips. The mighty Ieyasu lay in the grasp of the inexorable Master.

The Funeral

Down sinuous streets the cortege gaily trails,
Led by bald bonzes clad in purple frieze
Loosing aloft great banners to the breeze,
Gorgeous with glyptic gold, like galley sails.
Mild mousmees follow, wreathed in rosy veils

With lotus-bloom bedight, from neck to knees,
Swarming about the chrysalis like bees,
Wherefrom the spirit shed its silken scales.

Then mourners file on foot, a motley crew,
Masking their smiles with ill-pretended sighs,
Beneath huge parasols of every hue,
Blazoned with flying storks and butterflies.
Incongruous appears this festive funeral,
So little bitter death it doth recall!

Amid a group of onlookers stood a craftsman holding upon his shoulder a little girl. To her childish fancy this never-ending procession up the sinuous streets of Kunozan seemed a festive fairy pageant.

Iemitsu spied the little maid and, spurring his pony forward, smilingly offered her a white peony.

He remembered how his grandfather had once taken him to a temple, and pointing out among the carvings a lion surrounded by peonies had said:

"The peony is the queen of flowers, even as the lion is king of beasts."

Presenting the blossom Iemitsu murmured gallantly: "Behold thy name, beauteous Princess Peony."

Smiling timidly the little maid took the gift. "White Peony shall be my name," she replied as the boy galloped swiftly away.

The moonlight flooded his chamber, a restlessness possessed him, and, stealing out of the castle, he strode into the forest. The glamour of its lanterns illumined the gloom, and woke in the lad's mind a sentiment of mysterious awe. He half hoped that his grandsire's spirit might burst its brazen sepulchre and descend the long flight of steps to meet him.

He was turning back crestfallen from his vain and ghostless quest when a sound as of a child sobbing broke upon his ear.

“Where art thou, darling? Come to me, else my heart will break?“ moaned the voice.

“I come, sweet child,“ cried the lad compassionately. Was he bewitched, he wondered, was it a goblin luring him to his lair?

Again the elfin voice called, “Take, Take, I was talking to Amber. She hath run away, help me to find her.“

The bushes parted and White Peony stood beside him.

“Thou must return,“ he commanded manfully. “Little maids should not wander forth by night.“

“I‘m not affrighted,“ she protested, ‘‘and ‘tis not dark. See, there is the moon.“ She broke into a little nursery song:

> “Lady Moon, Lady Moon, peep out again,
> Open thy shoji. A cat and a rat
> Scamper now swiftly, o‘er mountain and plain,
> Bearing of sake a wonderful vat.
> Lady Moon, Lady Moon, peep out again.“

Old wives‘ tattle,“ flouted the lad, with the superiority of his sex. “In the moon are no cats. They be base, degraded beasts.“

Cats be not beasts,“ retorted Peony. “Amber is my own child. When she dieth she will be a Buddha, and will live in the moon.“

Stupid! Cats become goblins. They haunt tombs and devour corpses, that they may return to life in their likenesses.“

“‘Tis false! My Amber ne‘er would do so foul a deed. She is an angel cat, with more wit than horrid, teasing boys.‘‘

Of a sudden a bloodcurdling howl rent the stilly night, and the angel cat leapt upon her mistress.

Mistaking the pet for some malign brute Iemitsu chivalrously strove to wrest it from her shoulders.

With a demoniac snarl the infuriated cat buried its claws in his throat. Crazed with pain the lad tore it off and trampled it to death.

"Assassin!" cried the little maid, "thou hast slain my angel Amber. My child! My beautiful child! Odious monster, I ne'er will speak to thee again!"

Clasping her pet, White Peony ran weeping away, while sullen and abashed the boy strode slowly homeward.

II

THE PILGRIMAGE

> Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
> The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
> And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
> Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
> Whan Zephyrus eek with his swete breeth
> Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
> The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
> Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
> And smale foweles maken melodye
> That slepen al the nyght with open eye,
> So pryketh hem nature in hir corages;
> Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.
>
> CHAUCER.

A score of years have passed, and the boy, grown to manhood reigns all-powerful Shogun of Japan.

Implicitly had he obeyed the last counsels of his grandfather. Believing that the Jesuits were but

Emissaries of Philip Second he had posted at every crossroad the following proclamation:

So long as the sun shall warm the earth, let no Christian be so bold to come to Japan; and let all know that the King of Spain himself, or the Christian's god, or the great god of all, if he violate this command, shall pay for it with his head.

Nippon was now as wholly isolated from the world as the lonely Shogun from his light-hearted folk.

He burned with a flaming desire to share their humble joys and sorrows. He craved a life that would bring into full play a stalwart body and a subtle mind. Relinquishing his lofty office he would make trial of his strength, and, a simple man among men, risk his throw in the great hazard Life.

At dawn Iemitsu went to the stables and lovingly patted his great black destrier farewell. The stallion was too well known and he selected instead a fleet and slender mare. Mounting hastily he rode out into the vast unknown. Twilight shrouded the sleeping city in a veil of opal mist. The streets and gardens were deserted, vague, and mysterious.

It was late April; the great festival of Inari[1] would take place at Kyoto in May. Already pilgrims were setting out for the imperial city to witness the processions, horse races, and contests of swordsmanship. No festival was dearer to the popular heart or celebrated with more joyous abandon. Iemitsu determined to make pilgrimage thither in the guise of a simple samurai,

absconding from his shogunate with the eagerness of a schoolboy stealing a holiday.

[1]Inari, the Fox God, was also god of rice, of sword-smiths, and of thieves.

Silently he crossed the palace moat, and, traversing an avenue of cherry-trees, entered the quarter of the artisans. Here he chanced upon two men engaged in lively altercation before a newly lettered sign.

The complainant, a dealer in horses, was roundly rating his painter for omitting a dot in the ideograph denoting horse:

"That animal hath four legs, hath he not? Thou hast made but three! People will laugh me to scorn, saying that I deal in crippled beasts. Get thee hence, rascal, fetch thy ladder and mend thy work."

"That shall I not," retorted the painter of the sign.

"Then no money shalt thou have from me."

"Nay, not so hasty, good sir; I shall speedily correct the fault, but verily I have no need of a ladder. Behold!" Whereupon the artist dipped a brush, poised it between his thumb and forefinger, and with a dexterous fillip hurled it into the air.

It described a flying somersault, smote the sign, and fell; but in its brief impact the brush had placed the missing dot in exact position.

"Bravo," cried Iemitsu.

The Tokaido



"It undulated over naked knolls and pine-clad uplands Till it lost itself in distant forest gloom"
(Hiroshigi)



"Lowly wayfarers and labours, laden with faggots trampling stolidly homeward, their naked shoulders glistening with the sweat of toil"
(Hokusai)

The dealer‘s jaw fell in mute astonishment and he grudgingly counted out the painter‘s hire.

“How art thou called, my young magician?“ asked the Shogun, regarding the artist shrewdly.

“Jingoro, at thy service, worthy Sir.“

‘Thy service would greatly content me,“ assented Iemitsu. “In faith I sorely need a squire, and if thou art minded to journey with me on a merry pilgrimage I shall not haggle over thy wage.“

“Gladly will I go with thee, sweet Sir, for I perceive that thou art a valiant samurai. I doubt not I shall tumble into choice adventures; but first, with thy good lief, we will seek certain instruments of my craft wherewith we may earn a dinner upon the road if thy purse be light.“

Jingoro led the Shogun to his workshop, where bloomed a garden of sculptured peonies and painted peacocks preened their lacquered plumes.

“Worker of wonders,“ marvelled Iemitsu, “I would that the Shogun might see thy handiwork.“

The artist smiled scornfully: “The great Ieyasu was pleased to commend my paltry talent; but thy master Iemitsu is a witling who knoweth not genius when he setteth eyes thereon.“

“I call no man master, Sirrah,“ stormed the Shogun.

“If thou be a freelance wherefore wearest thou the Tokugawa crest?“ questioned the artisan. “Caitiff, thou didst steal thine armour. Not one step will I go with thee, thief!“

“Nay, my good man, I came by it honestly; yet since I am a ronin, I would fain rid me of this device.“

“Two dabs of my brush—thus, and thou art now a masterless man,“ rejoined Jingoro, suiting the act to the words.

“Hast thou a fitting mount?“ queried Iemitsu, “for in sooth my squire must not trudge afoot.“

“Better than horse have I,“ boasted Jingoro, “for Brindle, my bullock, can bear more grievous loads, and, pricked by the goad, whisk his tail in the face of any steed.“

“Tis a quaint mount,“ smiled the Shogun within himself, “still so much the better, since none will suspect who goeth thus escorted.“ Then jauntily— “Bravo, my gallant defender. Caparison thy charger, and let us to the road.“

Iemitsu and his sculptor-squire jogged merrily along the Tokaido.[1]

[1]The Tokaido (“the Eastern Sea Road“) which united Kyoto, the ancient capital, with Yedo (Tokio), the city of the Tokugawa Shoguns.

Lithe and gleaming the long highway uncoiled before them like a serpent. It wound its sinuous folds around wind-swept cliffs and surf-lashed promontories. It meandered through flowery moors and watery rice plains. It undulated over naked knolls and pine-clad uplands till it lost itself in distant forest gloom.

Near and far the highway was thronged with a host of wayfarers — daimios in palanquins, escorted by mounted samurai, throwing clouds of dust into the eyes of lowly foot-passengers; merchants belabouring jaded pack-mules, and labourers, laden with faggots tramping stolidly homeward, their naked shoulders glistening with the sweat of toil.

An we find an inn,“ pledged Jingoro, “I vow to Inari a tori built of steel.“

“That were a strange and costly gift,“ marvelled the Shogun.

“Pst!“ whispered the artisan behind his hand, “tis simply done; thus“ — and taking three needles he set two uprights in the earth and crossed the third above them.

“Trickster,“ laughed Iemitsu. “Inari send the hostlery soon, for I perish of hunger.“

Doubtless the Fox God condoned Jingoro‘s jest for, rounding a turn, they came upon a tavern. The courtyard swarmed with samurai bearing the Owari crest.

Loth to encounter the daimio, Iemitsu demanded that his repast be served behind a screen.

He gulped his seaweed soup, and was greedily devouring a freshly broiled tai when a troop of horsemen entered.

The raucous voice of their leader Iemitsu knew for that of Matsakura, daimio of Arima, a knave and miscreant whose malversations were renowned.

“Methought when last I met thee, pretty Prince,“ said the newcomer, “thou hadst no mind so soon to visit Yedo.“

“A solemn duty summoneth me thither,“ assented Owari pompously.

“Such as the purchase of a poodle for the Princess?“ chaffed the other.

“Nay, a mandate from our beloved Shogun,“ retorted the Prince with irony.

Iemitsu pricked his ears and crouched closer to a rent in the screen that he might better play the eavesdropper.

“Listen,“ cried the Prince, “I will read thee a letter:

“To the PRINCE OF OWARI:

“TRUSTED AND BELOVED KINSMAN:

“I am about to quit Yedo upon a secret quest. During my absence I desire thee to assume the responsibilities of the shogunate, which, in the event of my death, may one day fall upon thy shoulders.

“In the bonds of secrecy.

“IEMITSU.“

“He is mad,“ laughed Matsakura. “Truly he is possessed by a fox.“

“Of a surety,“ assented Owari, “and must be trapped and skinned.“

“I am not an Eta to slay and flay,“ growled the bravo.

“Nor I,“ retorted Owari, “yet is his pelt a rich one, and one may hunt with hounds what we would disdain to slaughter with our own hands.“

“And if I put my pack upon the scent, what share of the game have I, but carrion?“ demanded Matsakura, “since the pelt falleth on thy shoulders.“

The Prince pondered. “There is a little trifle pending, the mur — err — we will say the disappearance of a certain Christian daimio, whose seigniory thou now boldest. We will imagine the affair forgotten.“

The bravo bowed. “I will slay the fox,“ he promised, “though I hunt through hell.“

“Search the hells of Yedo,“ chuckled the Prince, “none should know them better than thou!“

“The morrow,“ agreed Matsakura. “I have business this night.“

“A love-tryst?“ leered Owari.

“Yea, though my mistress weeneth it not.“

“Beware lest coursing two foxes thou miss the nobler quarry and art trapped by the vixen.“

“Never fear, I shall bag them both,“ bragged the bravo, swaggering from the room.

III

HOW THE SHOGUN IN HIS OWN DESPITE BECAME A SQUIRE OF DAMES

“Have the rogues departed?“ whispered Iemitsu.

“Yea, Master,“ Jingoro rejoined tremblingly, “the Prince hath gone; but Matsakura and his henchmen bide, as goodly a band of cutthroats as e’er mine eyes beheld. But now the daimio did pour into the palm of mine host a stream of gold rios, bidding him, like the three monkeys, this night neither speak, hear, nor see!“

“I trust thou art not affrighted,“ smiled the Shogun reassuringly.

“Nay, Master, but yet misliketh me their monkey tricks; for in the chamber adjoining thine bideth a lone and lovely damsel.“

“Alone in this nest of hornets!“ exclaimed Iemitsu indignantly. “No maid may bide by night beneath the same roof with that scoundrel and keep her name unsullied. Listen, Friend, eavesdropping behind the screen I discovered Matsakura and the Prince conspiring ‘gainst my life. Fear not, but heed what I command. When all is still, saddle our mounts and wait in yonder grove. Perchance we may yet deliver the maid.“

The Shogun hastened to his chamber. Faintly through the shoji came a stifled sobbing. Iemitsu pondered. It woke within his slumbrous

memory a vague forgotten voice. He tapped softly and the sound suddenly ceased.

He strove to thrust the partition aside, but the voice cried imperiously:

“Dare not to enter else will I throw myself into the sea!“

“In pity hear me,“ he pleaded insistently. “Thou art in peril and I fain would aid thee.“

An eye peered stealthily through the crevice. Then the voice murmured:

“Jesu be praised, who hath sent thee to mine aid.“

With a crashing sword stroke he splintered the frail partition and entered.

A sudden cry of alarm rang from a startled sentry.

“Quick!“ cried Iemitsu, “the hounds yelp at our heels.“

Tearing her kimono in strips and braiding it in a rope, the maiden fastened it to the balcony. “To the ravine!“ She whispered, “the road swarms with samurai.“

Down sprang Iemitsu and the maid followed, clambering, slipping, swaying till she reached the extremity of the rope. Full two lance lengths lay between her and the river-bed.

“Leap,“ urged Iemitsu, stretching forth his hands. The maiden hesitated for an instant, then with a little cry fell swooning in his arms.

Clasping his light burden Iemitsu plunged into a thicket of tall bamboo. Scarce had he advanced a dozen paces when he heard the crashing of branches behind him.

Wheeling upon his heel he found himself suddenly confronted by a masked samurai.

“Matsakura!“ he laughed. “By good fortune I have found the very man I would meet.“

The sword of the daimio flashed a semicircle, but springing deftly aside the Shogun smote him upon the temple with mailed fist. He fell like a stone, his armour clanging upon the ground.

“Is he dead?“ gasped the maiden, pallid with terror.

“Nay,“ smiled Iemitsu, “but somewhiles will he bide quiet.“ Then turning to the girl he asked gallantly: “Who art thou, my fair and nameless Lady?“

“Lord, I am called White Peony, hither faring in quest of my father,“ she answered simply.

“Come with me, Peony, and I will aid thee in thy pilgrimage,“ he pleaded.

Nothing speaking, with eyes abased, the maid assented, toddling beside him with little limping steps. Her feet were clad only in thin cloven tabi, scant protection from the rough stones over which she toiled. Nevertheless the maid plodded on uncomplainingly, until, swaying as about to fall:

“Suffer me to rest a little space, good my Lord,“ she panted.

“Nay, Peony, I shall bear thee,“ he protested, lifting her tenderly. Her head drooping upon his shoulder, her sweet breath fanning his cheek, Iemitsu bore the maiden to the grove where in the shadows waited Jingoro.

With a sudden laugh of delight she ran to the sculptor. “My father,“ she cried, sobbing for very joy, “Have I truly found thee?“

“My little Peony, my White Peony,“ murmured Jingoro gently, tears welling in his eyes.

Iemitsu stood at gaze, bewildered by the consciousness that fate had revealed to him the object of his quest.

“Strange,“ he pondered, “its appeal lay for me in freedom from human ties; — yet here is a distressed maiden thrown unsought upon my chivalry; and my only misgiving is the fear lest she vanish as suddenly as she came!“

Converting his cloak into a pillion he invited the maiden to mount behind him.

“By thy leave, good my Lord, I would fain ride upon Brindle,“ she replied modestly. “The bullock knows me. See how he licks my hand.“

Well pleased to secure her company on any terms, Iemitsu transferred the pillion to the bullock and seated White Peony gallantly thereon.

Grey Shinto shrines blurred here and there the mossy tapestry of trees. Palpitating in the sunlight like a gleaming mirror stretched interminable rice fields, their turbid waters spotted with smears of green. A lonely stork winged its zigzag flight across the sky. Pale lotus buds peered from out crumpled pads, while nude peasants, knee deep in the mire, bent their bronze backs beneath the sun.

“Thou wilt not return to Yedo?“ demanded Iemitsu.

“Never,“ she answered firmly, “so long as Matsakura bideth there.“

“A most sweet and treacherous knave,“ commented Iemitsu drily.

Peony only smiled sadly.

“The daimio of Arima,“ explained Jingoro, “sent a go-between to demand my daughter in marriage; but she would none of him, wherefore I thought the matter ended, else would I not have left Yedo.“

“But that very morning,“ resumed the maiden, “Matsakura sent me a letter bidding me meet him secretly, wherefore I fled from Yedo seeking thee.“

“Yet is he a great and wealthy lord. Wouldst thou not be happy as his lady?“ asked Iemitsu wonderingly.

The maiden shuddered. “Nay my Lord, to the Christians he is merciless.“

Suddenly she clutched her father‘s arm and hid her face upon his shoulder. A ragged ronin was resting his hard-ridden nag by the roadside. As they neared he turned, glanced shiftily at them, then spurred furiously toward the inn.

“One of Matsakura‘s sentinels,“ smiled Iemitsu; “we would best press forward ere we are overtaken.“



“Up steep and tortuous trails they toiled – to a sapphire lake shrined in dim purple hills“



"Brindle, my bullock, can bear more grievous loads and whisk his tail in the face of any steed"
(Hokusai)

"Ware, Master," warned Jingoro, "an we go forward we fall into the hands of more of these gentry. See, here are fresh hoofprints of a troop of horse, and methinks I discern yonder the glint of halberds. We are trapped, nathless I will essay to hew for ye a passage."

"Nay! valiant squire, when one is not strong, needs must one be crafty. We will double on our tracks like sly foxes, and take the mountain trail we passed upon our right an hour syne. The spy will tell Matsakura that he met us beyond it. Thus shall we throw the hounds from the scent and lie in covert till the course be clear."

IV

THE HERMITAGE

Fuji San

Our stout-calved kurumayas groan and strain
Beneath the burden of the sedan-chair,
As up the steep and tortuous trail we fare,
Through bamboo thickets, lush with tropic rain,
To the high lake, above the verdurous plain,
Where, like the facets of a diamond rare,
Hakone flashes in the summer air,
A dazzling jewel without flaw or stain.

While far beyond, the slopes of Fuji loom,
Up-slanting o'er the hills aloof, alone,
Shimmer of snow by sunset softly kissed
'Mid shattered shards of scudding cloud, its cone
Limned like the lotus that beneath it bloom,
A vague, inverted fan of amethyst.

Up steep and sinuous paths they toiled, through groves of frail bamboo and giant cryptomeria, by grassy ways and stony mountain-trails, up, ever upward to a sapphire lake shrined in dim purple hills. Above its azure waters, floating miraculously in the sunset sky, glimmered a shining vision, slope rising above slope, height towering over height, in ever uplifting might, enwrapt in a mantle of roseate cloud — loomed Fujiyama, Mountain of Eternal Fire!

Descending, they fared through dusky forests till they came to a lonely hermitage beneath whose straw-thatched shelter sat a solitary bonze.

"Far from all worldly care and strife
Remote from pomp and pride
Let me pursue my peaceful life,

And in an humble hut abide,
On some lone mountainside."
(ARCHBISHOP JIYEN.)

Thus droned the hermit.

Then the instinct of acquisitiveness overcoming him, as he caught sight of the wayfarers, he solicited humbly:

"I have, great and august seigniors, a guest-house, with noble entertainment for man and beast, furnished with all manner of bathing-pools, both cool and torrid, and grateful bowers wherein ye may repose your wearied limbs — for but a paltry pittance."

''Well met," rejoined Iemitsu joyously "for we be both sorely famished and spent."

The bonze led them to a cluster of cottages, shrined amid bosky leafage in a mossy glen, a safe retreat from all pursuers. He proved a most assiduous host, serving his guests with shoots of young bamboo, rice-cakes, and goat's milk while Jingoro lured a trout from the mountain brook, which he broiled most toothsomely.

Hard by simmered a hot spring in which the hermit was wont to hibernate, entering with First Frost, and never quitting it until Cherry-Bloom; sleeping, eating, and dreaming of Nirvana, the while steaming torrents swirled about his withered limbs.

Jingoro took up mallet and chisel to carve an image of his daughter.

"Why canst thou not portray her wistful smile?" demanded the Shogun. "E'en her eyebrow hath lost its likeness in thy pencilled curve."

The sculptor shrugged and hummed an ancient saw:

"A maiden's eyebrow is a whetted scythe that moweth down the mind of man."

With deft strokes of his brush he applied a lustrous lacquer to the coils of blue-black hair.

"'Tis but a sorry likeness," still insisted Iemitsu, "that none would recognize."

"Brindle, my bullock, hath more wit than thou," bandied the carver. "I wager thee a bowl of sake that he will know the maid." With that he set the image upon a stone lantern.

Whereupon the bullock ceased his cropping, burst his tether, and, snorting gleefully, galloped to the statue. Lovingly he licked the painted cheeks and lacquered tresses, lowing gently the while.

Iemitsu gazed in round-eyed wonder.

"My roguish little father is ever at his tricks," laughed White Peony. "He hath daubed the image with brine and Brindle is daft for salt!"

On a day, the portrait completed, they bade their hermit-host a regretful farewell and resumed their journey.

"No longer need we fear the hounds of Matsakura," chuckled the sculptor. "They have coursed in pursuit of other game."

"Wherefore mounted they not hither?" demanded the Shogun bemused.

"Verily thou shalt see with thine own eyes," grinned Jingoro, pointing to a newly painted sign which read:

"Lazar house for Lepers!"

V

OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM

In Sal-no-Kawara, land of the Departed,
The little white spirits of dead children dwell.
Remote from their parents, they roam broken-hearted
On the pebble-strewn shores of the River of Hell.

And the sound of their cries and their pitiful moaning,
Is not like the voices of children alive.
"O Chichi, Koishi!" with sobbing and groaning,
"Koishi! Koishi!" they wail as they strive;

As they strive at the pitiless task never-ending
To gather white stones from the River of Souls.
Each day thus they labour, their little backs bending,
To heap up great towers in the pebble-strewn shoals.

Pagodas of Love for their father and mother
They toilsomely build in the bed of the stream,
Each pebble a prayer for a sister or brother
Abiding on earth in the sun's joyous gleam.

From daylight till dusk, thus they toil ever-weeping;
But soon as the sun sinketh low in the west;
Come the Oni, the demons of Hell, never sleeping,
To torture their victims with scoffing and jest.

Ad they cast down the towers with blows of the hammer,
And they shatter the shrines which each child-ghost uprears,
And they scatter the stones with a terrible clamour,
When Lo! In the heavens a vision appears!

'Tis Jizo, the gentle, the father benignant,
The patron of children who fatherless dwell
In Sai-no-Kawara mid spirits malignant
On the pebble-strewn strand of the River of Hell.

"Too soon little souls, from the world ye departed
To Sai-no-Kawara the land of the dead,
Remote from your parents to roam broken-hearted.
Children mine never fear!" Thus the good Jizo said.

Then he brandished his staff and the demons departed!
Enfolding his robe with a fatherly grace
He takes to his bosom each child broken-hearted
And kisses the tears from its sorrowful face.

And they cling to his garments no longer affrighted,
Like lambkins they gambol and sweetly they sing:
"O Chichi! O Jizo, our Father!" Delighted,
They laughingly dance round the feet of their King!

After LAFCADIO HEARN.

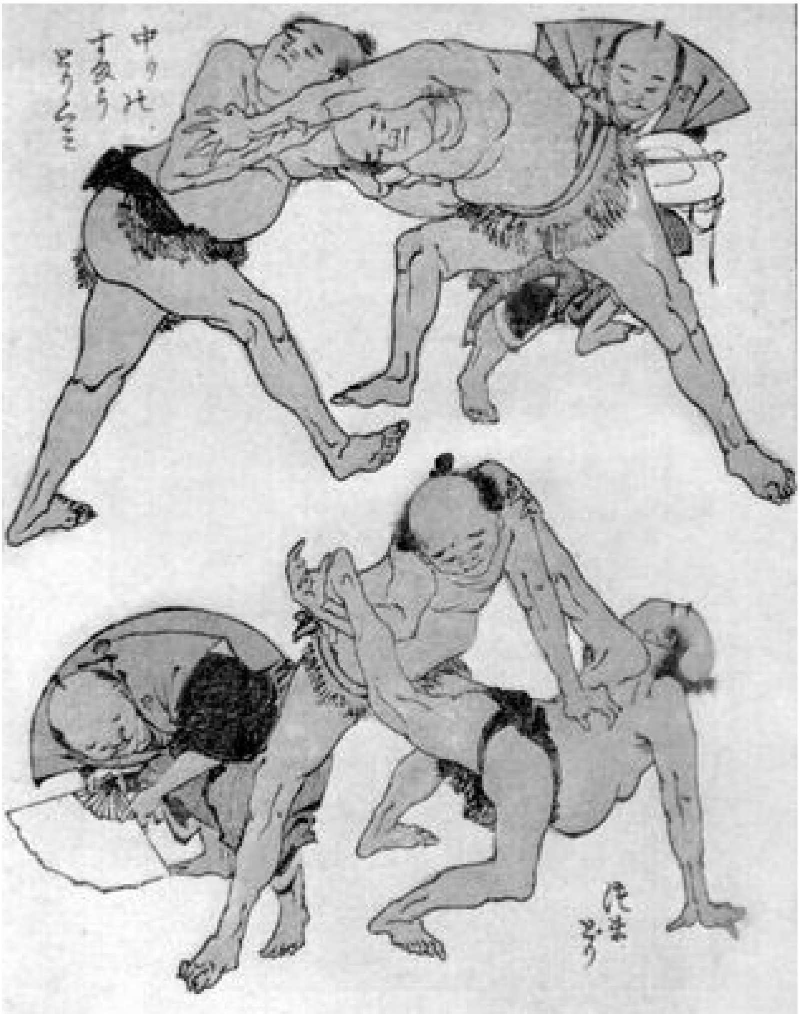
Before a rock-carven statue of Jizo knelt a bereaved mother. She had heaped at the feet of the Never Slumbering God her little pile of pebbles and was showering thereon her tears, crooning the whiles a piteous tune:

"Where doth my little child to-night,
Beneath ne'er darkening skies,
In some far land still find delight
In chasing dragonflies?"
(CHIYO.)

As though in answer to her prayer, from the face of compassionate Jizo there fluttered down a golden dragonfly to the sorrowing suppliant.

"Grieve not, dear mother," cried White Peony, enfolding the weeping woman gently in her arms. "Jesu shall bring thy lost one back to thee." She moved her hand slowly from brow to heart and shoulder to shoulder in the sign of the cross.

"Everywhere was joy and tumult"



"Strong men wrestled and tumbled"

"Mountebanks performed merry antics"



"Climbed, balanced and capered"



“On a dais stood White Peony, her robe bedight with gleaming jewels“

Iemitsu gasped in consternation. She was a Christian, one whom he must punish with banishment or death.

“Thou wilt not betray me to thy master!“ she pleaded.

“I swear,“ vowed the unsuspected Shogun, “that I will keep thy secret. I love thee with a deathless flame; I will renounce my hope of Nirvana and fight for thine evil faith.“

She laid her hand in his. “Jesu will give thee light,“ she said, “thou shalt know it is not evil.“

“Since thou dost love me,“ he protested, “there is no power of earth or heaven can part us. Let us go to my sister in Kyoto. There shall we be wed,“ and he smiled, thinking of the little maid‘s surprise when she should know his sister was the Empress.

VI

THE PASSING SHOW

A land not like ours, that land of strange flowers,
Of dæmons and spooks with mysterious powers —
Of gods who breathe ice, who cause peach-blooms and rice,
And manage the moonshine and turn on the showers.

Each day has its fair or its festival there,
And life seems immune to all trouble and care —
Perhaps only seems, in that island of dreams
Sea-girdled and basking in magical air.

They‘ve streets of bazaars filled with lacquers and jars,
And silk stuffs, and sword-blades that tell of old wars;
They‘ve Fuji‘s white cone looming up, bleak and lone,
As if it were trying to reach to the stars.

They‘ve temples and gongs, and grim Buddhas in throngs,
And pearl-powdered geisha with dances and songs;

Each girl at her back has an imp, brown or black,
And dresses her hair in remarkable prongs.

On roadside and street toddling images meet,
And smirk and kowtow in a way that is sweet;
Their obis are tied with particular pride,
Their silken kimonos hang scant to the feet.

With purrs like a cat they all giggle and chat,
Now spreading their fans, and now holding them flat;
A fan by its play whispers, "Go now!" or "Stay!"
"I hate you!" "I love you!"—a fan can say that!

Beneath a dwarf tree, here and there, two or three
Squat coolies are sipping small cups of green tea;
They splutter, and leer, and cry out, and appear
Like bad little chessmen gone off on a spree.

At night—ah, at night the long streets are a sight,
With garlands of soft-coloured lanterns alight—
Blue, yellow, and red twinkling high overhead,
Like thousands of butterflies taking their flight.

Somewhere in the gloom that no lanterns illume
Stand groups of slim lilies and jonquils in bloom;
On tiptoe, unseen 'mid a tangle of green,
They offer the midnight their cups of perfume.

The whiles, sweet and clear from some tea garden near,
A ripple of laughter steals out to your ear;
And the fragrant wind brings from a samisen's strings
That pathos that's born of a smile and a tear.
THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.

Kyoto was abloom. Festooned with multicoloured lanterns it resembled a sunny garden, quivering with a swarm of brilliant butterflies.

From all the countryside madcap throngs flocked the teeming city, mingling song and laughter with droning of drum and samisen, the treble of women and children with the bass of brawling men. Hawkers shouted wares of every description, from a child's trumpery toy to a priceless Muramasa sword-blade. Goldsmiths lured the ladies with jewelled gewgaws and carved jade. Humble maidens bartered hard-earned sen for paper fans and cotton fabrics, whose painted patterns vied in beauty of design with the broideries of proud aristocrats.

Booths lined the streets, with tarnished armour, images and kakemonos pilfered from crumbling castles and forgotten fanes. Parasol painters splashed flying storks and pine-boughs upon glowing sunset skies.

Tea-houses flung wide their doors. From overhanging balconies smiling geisha showered fragrant blossoms.

Stalwart bronze-skinned coolies bearing the gilded norimon of some great lady, whose slant eyes peered between the silken curtains, beat with fist and halberd a pathway through the crowd.

Everywhere was joy and tumult. In the square mountebanks performed merry antics. Strong men wrestled and tumbled, pole-vaulters climbed, balanced, and capered. The bullock of Jingoro attracted scant notice, for here were stranger beasts; bears, snakes, and monkeys danced, writhed, and mimicked the carnival of humanity.

The travellers paused before a troupe of acrobats who, guised in feathered garments as Tengu, with long prehensile noses, juggled balls and coins while a feminine member of their company wrote fortunes upon a screen.

Recognizing White Peony the girl traced the word, "Beware," then drew a picture of a pack of hounds pursuing a frightened fox.

At that instant like a sudden avalanche a troop of Hatamotos galloped furiously down the street. Shrieking women and children flattened themselves against the walls and fled helter-skelter in frantic fright from beneath the chargers' hoofs.

White Peony was thrown violently to the ground, but Iemitsu snatched her swiftly aside.

"What dog dares thus imperil the lives of our people?" he cried indignantly, when to his astonishment he descried his own crest, the Tokugawa trefoil.

"It is the garrison of the citadel," rejoined a bystander, "ordered forth to crush the uprising in Arima."

Peony sought his arm. "Arima!" she echoed anxiously. "That is the daimiate of Matsakura, my childhood home, whose folk are meek and peaceful Christians. Intercede with the Mikado, I pray thee, to stay this bloodshed."

The Shogun flushed with wrath, but swiftly mastering himself he reassured her: "I will seek the Emperor and plead for thy friends. Meanwhile wait my return in the temple of Inari. Thou wilt be safe with the priestesses."

Her heart freighted with vague foreboding White Peony entered the temple torii.

The priestesses were busily arranging their famous festival-float, on which was to be presented a scene from an ancient drama.

Delightedly they added White Peony to their cast, while Jingoro aided them in the decoration of their sumptuous car. Stretched across the front of the lofty float was a magnificent tapestry, a gift from the merchants of Deshima. Above, on a canopied stage, were

posed the actors and actresses garbed in wondrous robes of blood-red satin spangled with silver suns. On a dais stood White Peony representing the Fox Goddess Inari, her white fur robe bedight with gleaming jewels.

Musicians clashed cymbals and beat upon gongs as the sacred car lumbered by, its lofty pagoda overtopping the roofs.

The tumult of the forenoon had increased tenfold. Doves from the temple hovered bewildered over the crowd, unable to alight upon the pavement.

Into a surging sea the can wedged itself and halted.

Suddenly the mob shrieked:

“The samurai! The samurai!“

A troop of soldiery rode down the helpless bystanders. Throwing back his helmet the leaden stared wonder-stricken at White Peony.

The colour fled from her cheeks as she met the gaze of Matsakura.

With a sudden wrench he tore her from the car and muffling her in his cloak, rode from the city gate.

VII

SHOGUN VERSUS MIKADO

Meanwhile Iemitsu hastened to his ancestral castle of Nio and robed himself in sumptuous court regalia.

Despatching a herald to announce his coming he mounted a great black stallion and accompanied by a suite of mailed Hatamotos rode into the palace court. Here he dismounted and followed only by a page bearing his sword entered the palace. Traversing a series of antechambers he was ceremoniously conducted to the “Mysterious

Purple Hall." The great golden doors flew open as by magic at the whisper of his name. The Shogun entered. The daimios of an hundred provinces were convened in a grand council of war. Ranged on successive terraces according to rank, they waited in hushed expectancy.

Suddenly the chrysanthemum-broidered draperies were drawn aside and revealed a timid, slender youth.

With one accord the throng prostrated themselves and chanted reverently[1]:

[1] Hymn to the Mikado.

In the vale of Kashiwara dwells the monarch of the mountains,
    In Yamato, land of mountains, isle of even-blooming trees,
Sweet and gentle is the murmur of its ever-plashing fountains
    And its ever-rushing rivers, seeking ceaselessly the seas.

Here, of yore, Amaterasu, she the goddess of the heaven,
    Throned her offspring in Yamato o'er the flowery isle to reign,
Here through endless generations till the earth to dust be riven,
    And the firmament eternal fade to ceaseless gloom again.

Then as long as on the mountains blooms the plum with blossoms bending,
    And as long as in the valleys sings the nightingale of love,
And as long as in the forests 'neath the showers of heaven descending
    Fall the blood-red leaves of Autumn from the maple boughs above,
Shall our god-descended monarch ever reign in joy unending
    O'er Yamato, land of mountains, isle of plenty, peace, and love!

On bended knees Iemitsu approached the throne.

"Thou art too late, trusted Shogun," smiled the monarch; "the die is cast, the deliberations of our inner council are ended."

“Ended, and without us!“ Iemitsu ironically repeated. “I could scarce believe my ears were it not that my troops have been ordered forth without my authority. Who hath put this affront upon me?“

The Mikado winced, but gave no answer.

Scanning the Shogun with narrowed lids, Owari interposed adroitly:

“Mine honoured kinsman, thou didst confer upon me power to act in thy behalf, and the need was urgent.“

“What momentous matter could not await my consideration?“ questioned Iemitsu contemptuously.

The Mikado clicked his fan. Thereupon the Chancellor droned:

“Whereas a violent and sudden uprising hath broken out in the province of Arima, his Heaven-Descended Majesty the Emperor Go Komatsu, having duly hearkened to the counsel of his advisers, hath despatched an army of one hundred thousand warriors, under the command of Matsakura Shigasaira, to take whatsoever measures he deemeth fitting for the quelling of said revolt and the restoration of peace.“

“Hath just inquisition been made concerning the cruelties that caused this peace-loving folk to rise

against their tyrant?“ demanded the Shogun sternly.

“A petition hath indeed been submitted which doth not meet my imperial pleasure,“ retorted the Mikado.

“Shall thy subjects, Sire, be condemned without a hearing?“ demanded Iemitsu indignantly. “Let the petition be read!“

Casting a furtive glance at the Mikado, who bowed assent, the Chancellor read:

“For the sake of our wives and children we have taken refuge in this castle.

“It must not be thought that our act is one of rebellion against the august Mikado. It is simply because we consider our faith in Christ the one matter of supreme moment. . . . For this we have suffered shame, torture, and death!

“It is not a malicious insurrection against our humane government, but the appeal of a loyal people to the protection of their loved sovereign.“

“August Tenshu and most wise Councillors,“ pleaded Iemitsu, “doth not our ancient faith teach compassion to our enemies? How much more, then, should we display to our friends

The Spirit of Bushido“
(Chivalry)

From dim, departed days the Sunrise Isle
    Hath shrined an heaven-descended Trinity,
Three sister-goddesses celestial smile,
    Wisdom and Valour, and Humanity,
To hearten man to deeds of chivalry.

Three heaven-sent treasures have the gods assigned,
    The threefold emblems of “The Knightly Way“:
The shining Mirror, symbol of the Mind,
    The sacred Sword, sceptre of Valour‘s sway,
And flawless Jewel, sign of Mercy kind.

Wisdom the warrior‘s helm is, we arc taught,
    And Valour is his shield amid the press.
Yet, an he bath not *Mercy,* bath he naught;
    For vain is Wit and idle, Dauntlessness

Companioned not with Pity 'gainst distress.

For e'en the knights most valiant and most great,
The most endeared in memory reverent,
Were yet withal the most compassionate.
Like Kusunoki, who, with pity rent,
Wept for his vanquished foes' untimely fate.

Like to that hero, who, one wintry day,
Beneath the frosty moon, undaunted, led
His little band of warriors to the fray,
'Gainst whelming odds, into the conflict red.

With one great shout, clashes the surging throng.
Fast flows the tide of battle to and fro.
Now falls a youth, upon his lips a song;
Anon, a burly bonze rides high and low
With lance in rest and brave uplifted shield,
Like an avenging god against the foe,
Charging on stallion fleet across the field,
Sends two score warriors down to endless woe.

Bleeding with grievous wounds from sword and spear
The leader turns his flagging troops to flight,
And spurs his sore-spent steed, in mortal fear,
Into the icy waters of the night.
Then the brave victor, satiate of gore,
Sped to the succour of his drowning foes,
And haled them safe to land and dressed each sore,
Gave them to eat and solaced all their woes,
And set them free—his friends for evermore!

That perfect knight, fearless and free from blame,
Prince Satsuma, of brave, benignant reign,
Who home in triumph from Korea came,
Raised a great tomb to all the unknown slain,
Foeman or friend, in Pity's sacred name,
That their shrived souls might mount to Heaven's High Plain!

Such are the men we needs must emulate
To gain the crown of kingly chivalry,
The holy lives of knights compassionate
Who hold within their hearts the virtues three,
Greatest of which is sweet Humanity.

Then grant us zeal to tread "The Knightly Way,"
And hearten us to deeds of Chivalry,
That Mirror, Sword, and Gem of Shining Day,
Wisdom, and Valour and Humanity,
These glorious heaven-sent gifts of purest gold,
We keep unsullied as in days of old!

TENSHU NISHIMURA.

"Surely," declared Iemitsu, "our course is plain. The code of Ieyasu commands: 'Should a daimio, by unwarrantable cruelties, provoke his vassals to just revolt . . . the castles and estates of said daimio shall be forever confiscated.' Wherefore let a courier he dispatched instantly to Matsakura summoning him hither to answer to this indictment."

"Nay, the code of Ieyasu doth not concern this case," retorted the Emperor. "These members of the accursed sect are beyond the pale and should suffer banishment or death."

"Know, most august Tenshu," replied the unruffled Shogun, "that thou hast been maliciously deceived. Ieyasu banished the Jesuits, not on account of their faith, but because they were secret spies of Philip, King of Spain. These Krishitans are thine own kindred, than whom no more loyal subjects of thy rule exist.

"Unknown to all I have witnessed their sacred rites and marvelled at the wondrous spirit wherewith in long-suffering silence they have borne the causeless oppressions of their brutal daimio.

"They have suffered the torments of hell. They have been burned, torn asunder, crucified, and boiled alive; they have wandered naked and shelterless, destitute and despised of men.

"Wherefore, most august Master, thou hast erred in despatching Matsakura, for a keener blade than his should cut this knot!"

Seizing the edict Temitsu with a single brush-stroke blotted out the name of Matsakura, then calmly inscribed his own.

"If I may not even be permitted to name my servitors," stormed the incontinent Mikado, "I will not remain a helpless puppet; but do hereby abdicate!"

"Thy wise and august determination is most obediently accepted. Faithfully shall I guard the reins of power for thine infant son," smiled Iemitsu blandly, while, white with fury, the dethroned monarch staggered from the hail.

Seating himself upon the throne the Shogun addressed his subjects:

"My friends, it is now my prerogative to command, yours to render me implicit obedience. If any one here resents this claim, I will end the argument with my sword!"

Enthusiastic acclamations greeted this announcement, and Iemitsu commanded:

"The Council shall conduct affairs of state in my absence, for upon the instant shall I set forth to deal punishment upon Matsakura."

"May it not be that there behind the sky
Snow-blossoms falling, falling from on high,"



"The spring, the long-longed spring hath come at last?"



"A light flared fitfully upon the malignant face of Matsakura"

VIII

THE ASSAULT

Krishitan Jashu-mon

(Battle Hymn of the Arima Christians.)

Let us march, tramp! tramp!
    Against the Powers of Gloom,
The sons of Faith, in Christ his name,
    Defying Death's dark tomb
With dauntless will unbeaten still,
    The legion of the Lord,
A smile of Peace upon our lips
    But in our hands a sword!

While shot and powder still remain
    Our thund'rous guns shall flame
And blast Sin's teeming ramparts till
    The craven foe in shame,
Like sand before the whirlwind swept,
    Shall falter, fall, and flee.
By grace of God and our great guns
    We'll gain the victory!

Chorus:
    With dauntless will, etc.

At the head of an hundred thousand warriors rode Matsakura, proud, triumphant, and exultant.

It seemed to him that Fortune had granted all his desires. The confiscation of the Christians' estates would mean for him untold wealth. The quelling of the rebellion would elevate him to the rank of Commander-in-Chief why not to the very Shogunate? Nay, softly, ambition was bearing him too far. Iemitsu must be reckoned with.

But where was the wary fox?

‘‘What matters?“ lie shrugged. “Suffice it for the nonce to annihilate the Evil Sect! A mere handful of peasants and ronins,“ he smiled, “pitted against my army!“

“However there is no time to lose,“ he reflected. “Each day the rebels gather strength. They burn and plunder castles and cities. Each hour counts!“

Hara Castle jutted from a crag girt on three sides by the sea. On the fourth it was fortified by a wide moat. Within its massy walls were gathered twenty thousand Christian warriors with their wives and children, waiting vainly their appeal to the Mikado.

Matsakura rushed to the assault, but the valiant garrison repulsed his army with bloody loss. His culverins could scarcely scratch the massive walls.

But a deadlier foe confronted the Christians—Famine.

One moonless night a thousand warriors filed from a sally-port in a desperate sortie.

Skirting the cliff in single file they clambered down to a fishing hamlet. Here the friendly peasants gave them food, and they set forth for the castle.

Scarcely had they reached the cliff when the rising sun disclosed them to their foes. With sword and lance the samurai of Matsakura fell upon them and massacred them to a man.

Still undismayed the starving Christians held out, but their hearts turned to stone as they beheld a vessel flying the Dutch flag enter the roadstead. From its deck the Hollanders lowered a score of monstrous guns. These the troops of Matsakura mounted in position and trained upon the fortress.

They battered the beleaguered castle, shattered battlements and towers, breached the walls, but the white-cross banner floated still.

In the face of death the unconquerable Christians chanted their battle-hymn:

> “With dauntless will unbeaten still,
> The legion of the Lord,
> A smile of Peace upon our lips
> But in our hands a sword!“

Attaching thereto a missive, Matsakura shot an arrow into the castle, promising pardon in the name of the Shogun if the defenders would lay down their arms.

The trustful garrison complied, hoisted a white flag, threw their arms from the battlements, and opened their gates.

The treacherous host poured in, putting the weapon-less Christians to fire and sword.

Wresting stones from the battlements, the defenders hurled them upon the assailants. Tooth and nail they fought, clutching their foes in a desperate struggle with death.

So swift was the onslaught that the invaders slew each other in blind confusion. Wounded and dying they trampled underfoot. Men, women, and children they ruthlessly slaughtered. Babes from their mothers‘ bosoms they flung into the sea.

Suddenly there rose a shout: “The Shogun! The Shogun!“ as Iemitsu and his brave hatamotos surged into the shambles.

He wore an expression of implacable wrath.

“How he hateth us!“ murmured the Christians.

Hate indeed possessed his soul, the holy wrath of an avenging god, cold, silent, and inexorable. But that hate was not for the Christians.

“Succour the wounded,“ he commanded; “dispose the dead for burial! Proclaim pardon to all who have survived this ruthless massacre! Matsakura hath signed his death-warrant!“

He stayed not for further parley but rushed into the castle. From crypt to parapet he searched, questing vainly his beloved.

At last, when hope had died within his heart, he spied upon the battlements a frail pagoda. From its topmost story fluttered—a white peony!

Threading a labyrinth of fallen timbers, he gained a shattered gate. The great bronze doors stood ajar. Crossing the courtyard he passed a guardhouse whence issued voices; but none perceived him as he stole silently to the stairway.

Of a sudden a plank creaked under his tread! A guard came forth and peered stealthily around.

“Only the mad maid, screaming in vain for aid,“ he shrugged, slinking back to the guardhouse.

Iemitsu smiled. She was there. He had come in time.

A light gleamed from an upper landing.

He climbed the stairway and tapped softly upon the shoji.

“Peony,“ he whispered.

A footstep rustled the matting, then all was still.

Again he tapped and called.

A soft voice questioned timidly: “Who art thou?“

“It is I, Iemitsu,“ he murmured.

A quick cry of delight greeted his ears.

Bracing himself against the wall he thrust with all his strength. The shoji failed to budge. Drawing his sword he splintered the screen with a sharp crash.

Alarmed by the uproar the guards ran out in angry altercation.

Iemitsu waited, scarce drawing breath.

Of a sudden he caught the glint of a pair of eyes peering at him through the shadows.

He lunged at them with his sword. With a frightened gasp the samurai scurried down the stairs.

A roar of curses and clatter of armour rose as a group of guardsmen rushed in.

The Shogun unsheathed his sword and sprang to meet them, his blade brandished, prepared to strike.

From the shattered shoji a light flared fitfully upon the malignant face of Matsakura.

Iemitsu smiled, waiting in scornful silence.

The leader paused midway up the flight, not daring to engage at such disadvantage.

“So my fox,“ he gibed, “thou didst plot to rob my hen-roost!“

Iemitsu stood calm and motionless, disdaining to reply.

Matsakura burst into a volley of oaths:

“Vile accomplice of Krishitans, come down, and I will carve the cross upon thy heart!“

Still the Shogun was silent, biding his time. Finding threats futile Matsakura shifted from bluster to flattery.

“Most honoured friend,“ he fawned, “do not force me to slay thee. Yield me but the maid and I will set thee free!“

A smothered cry came from behind the shoji. With a sudden sweep Iemitsu crashed his blade upon the helm of Matsakura, who staggered back upon the landing.

Two samurai sprang instantly into his place. The first attacked furiously; the second edged around the Shogun, striving to stab him from behind.

With a twist of the wrist Iemitsu sent the sword of the first flying, then, wheeling abruptly, he thrust the other through the throat.

Groaning horribly he fell lifeless to the floor, while his companion fled terror-stricken down the stairs.

Iemitsu looked sternly down. “Come dog,“ he muttered, “tis thy turn!“

Matsakura cowered, cursing between his teeth.

“Poltroon,“ scoffed the Shogun, “if thou wilt not fight slay thyself!“

Stung by the taunt Matsakura bounded up the stairs. The tower rang like a smithy. Steel clanged upon steel, in lightning thrust and parry. Inch by inch Matsakura lost ground, beset more and more relentlessly by his exultant adversary.

Step by step he retreated, till, suddenly, Iemitsu with a swift stroke sent him reeling against the rail, which crashed beneath his weight bearing him lifeless to the pavement.

Iemitsu ran to the chamber and threw open the shoji. With a joyous cry White Peony sprang into his arms. "A little more beloved, and thou wouldst have been too late," she smiled.

"Wouldst thou have slain thyself?" he demanded anxiously.

"Nay," she laughed. "I would have fled with another."

Lifting the hibachi she disclosed a hidden ladder, from whose lower rungs emerged —Jingoro.

"Brindle waiteth at the postern gate, good Master," he whispered; "thou knowest he can carry double."

"Nay," cried Iemitsu, "thou shalt bestride thy trusty bullock and ride at my right hand, as becomes the sire of the Shogun's bride."

Jingoro threw himself on his knees.

"Daughter of mine is she not," he confessed, "but child of the murdered daimio of Arima, whom I saved from this very castle, and reared as mine own daughter."

"Wherefore twice hast thou rescued her," smiled Iemitsu. "Still shall I call thee Father. Thou shalt make resplendent with thy carving my ancestral temples of Nikko. What shall he carve for thee, my Love?"

"A portrait of Amber in a bower of peonies," she pleaded winsomely.

"Thy cat!" he smiled.

Peony clapped her hands.

“Thou art the lad,“ she laughed, “who played with me in the long ago!“

“I am indeed that unlovely youth,“ he confessed, clasping her to his heart.

Felicity

White shine the buds a-dream against the sky,
    In verdant glades small, feathered fowl give voice,
All joyance is! The very gods rejoice,
    Gladsome to greet Earth‘s merry minstrelsy.

KOYOSHIU

CHAPTER X

THE SCARLET THREAD

I

THE SOUL OF THE SAMURAI

The girded sword is the living soul of the Samurai.
IEYASU.

The Sword's the Soul of thy vast seigniory,
Forged in the white hot flame, from flawless steel,
With mighty hammer-stroke and slow anneal,
Upon the anvil of eternity.
Their hearts aglow with pride and loyalty
For Sire and Land, thy Sons with dauntless zeal
Press forward to the fray, through woe or weal,
Seeking delight in life's extremity!

Land of the Cods! Thy sword-smiths as of yore
Still forge the perfect glaives of purest ore.
Still live the Samurai, who honour breathe,
And, rather than to shame their ancestry,
To live dishonoured and dishonour thee,
In their own hearts their swords would sooner sheathe.
TAKESADA.

TEN score years syne, in the fruitful province of Harima, there dwelt a mighty daimio, Asano no Kami, overlord of the puissant castle of Ako, who was beloved by all for manifold deeds of kindness throughout his seigniory.

Now it fortuned that after long years of laborious upbuilding of his province, Lord Asano was one day summoned by royal decree to appear at Yedo in company with another nobleman, Lord Kamei, to receive and feast the Envoy of the Mikado.

Accordingly, the Master of Ceremonies, Kira, an overbearing, boorish knave, was appointed to teach them the ritual. Overwhelming his pupils with unceasing insult and irony, he jeered at their provincial manners, seeking to make laughing-stocks of them in the eyes of the Envoy.

Upon Asano most especially he vented a resentment born of greed and envy. Long had he coveted the grand domain of Ako, and under pretext that all mines were imperial fiefs, had seized its mountain fastnesses. But the ancestral castle still remained in possession of Asano, wherefore Kira plotted to provoke its lord to some violent act, which would compass his disgrace and the confiscation of his seigniory.

Kira commanded each daimio to bring a councillor or second. The Lord of Ako had bidden his friend Kurano attend him; but this nobleman had been unwillingly detained and Asano came alone.

Kira would hear neither explanation nor apology, insisting that Asano had shown wilful negligence and contempt of ceremony.

“Unmannerly boor,“ he blustered, “Atone for thine insolence. Kneel and tie the ribbon of my sandal.“

Asano rose to his full height.

“If my loyalty to the Mikado requires such menial service,“ he smiled, “I will perform it for the Imperial Envoy, but I decline to act as the foot-servant of Lord Kira.“

Foiled in his attempt to provoke Asano, Kira sneered:

“Perchance thou deemest thyself sufficiently versed in etiquette to dispense with my instruction! So be it then. The lessons are ended.“

Whereupon Honzo, councillor of Lord Kamei, deeming that the ill-will of Kira might be propitiated by a bribe, prostrated himself at the foot of the dais.

“A thousand pardons, sweet and gentle lord,“ he fawned, “I have failed to fulfil a command most urgently enjoined upon me by my master.“

“We have no further concern with thy master,“ retorted Kira arrogantly.

“Nay, most august Seignior,“ protested Honzo, “my Lord, realizing thy condescension in squandering so much precious time, bade me present thee this trifling token of his gratitude, the largest and most perfect pearl of his fisheries.“

Kira eyed the jewel greedily.

“This is a wondrous gem,“ he gloated, “perfect of form, of size unexampled, and lustre exquisite. Its worth must be beyond all price.“

“But not so priceless as the value my master places upon thine honourable instructions.“

“Fool,“ thundered Kira, “why didst thou not give this to me before?“

“My master enjoined me to wait until the lesson was terminated, ‘Else,‘ said he, ‘Lord Kira may think it a bribe, whereas ‘tis merely a token of gratitude.“

“Lord Kamei has displayed both tact and munificence. Summon thy master that I may complete his instruction.“

II

HYMN TO THE ENVOY

“May our heaven-gendered lord with joys o‘erflow,
Live for a thousand ages!“ Thus we pray,
“Until the tiny pebbles slowly grow
To giant boulders clad with lichens grey!“

Twin-peaked Tsukuba hath a shadow vast
On this side and on that alike down-cast,
But thy great shadow stretcheth on and on,
Its length exceeding and excelled by none!

TSURAYUKI.

Thus chanted courtiers and singing-maidens, scattering chrysanthemum petals before his triumphal path, the whiles with fanfare of trumpets and droning of drums the Imperial Envoy and his majestic suite filed solemnly into the hail.

An hundred daimios fluttered their broidered robes of rainbow-painted silks. Golden lacquered pillars gleamed against a background of multicoloured carving. Azure wreaths of incense curled upward from bronze censers to the coffered ceiling, and the air was laden with scent of many flowers.

When the procession had wound its lengthy train through the pillared galleries amid gasping genuflexions of the multitude, Prince Taiko mounted the dais and thus addressed the assemblage:

“Loyal subjects of my heaven-descended brother, we thank you for this fitting welcome so graciously vouchsafed us. May ye ever dwell in ceaseless love and righteousness in this fair-flowered land of our fathers.

“If ye have petitions I will hear them. If injustice hath been done, it shall be requited. All wrongs shall be redressed.“

“August honourable Prince,“ fawned Kamei, “the spirit of our heaven-descended sovereign is as the rising sun Upon the cherry-blossom. Under his beneficent rule sorrow is illusory and evil unknown.“

The eyes of all turned to Asano in tense expectancy. White with wrath the haughty daimio loosed the pent-up passion of his soul.

“Enough of flattery,“ he cried. “Thou hast promised, most august Prince, to requite all wrong. I therefore accuse Lord Kira of stealing my estates, and condemning to servitude my free-born peasants!“

“Silence,“ thundered the Envoy. “Retire forthwith from this sacred place whose spirit thou hast profaned!“

Asano was about to go when a sudden blow sent him sprawling on the mats. Staggering to his feet he rushed upon his adversary with bared blade.

“Seize the miscreant,“ cried Kira, “he would assassinate the Prince!“

Asano slashed, cutting a gash in Kira‘s forehead.

The guards sprang upon him. He lunged blindly and fell beneath their crashing halberds.

That night Kurano came to his prison.

“Ne‘er shall I forgive myself,“ he mourned, “that I deserted thee in thine hour of need!“

“Friend, do not reproach thyself,“ protested Asano, I must suffer the penalty of folly. My daughter I commit to thy care. In happier days I hoped that she might wed thy son. But alas! Kira will despoil me of all and Camellia will be dowerless.“

“Nathless,“ vowed Kurano, “I swear that, betide what may, my son shall wed thy daughter!“

A troop of white-robed Hatamoto tramped solemnly in.

“I have the unwelcome duty, Lord Asano,“ vouch-safed the leader, “to apprise thee of the imperial decree. Thou art condemned to commit seppuku!“

Asano bowed in calm assent.

“Tis the dearest privilege of a samurai,“ he smiled dauntlessly.

III

BEFORE THE STORM

Fair goddess of the sapphire Nippon sky,
Upon what elfin loom with fingers light
Weavest thou thus for our supreme delight
Thy wondrous web of living broidery,
The red brocade and russet tapestry
Of forest, field and moor aflame and bright,
Glory of golden grain and blossoms white,
All merged through mellow haze in harmony?

Dreaming awake, the mild-eyed cattle stand
Knee-deep within the lilies of the nil.
A breathless languor broods on every hand
In plenitude of peace, unspoken, still,
Save for a single, bold, upsoaring butterfly,
Winging its fragile petals to the sky.

The castle of Ako gleamed white through billowing oaks and maples, its massy abutments jutting defiantly from the russet hillside. Behind frowned a wail of serrated ranges; while before it, sloping gently to the sea, drowsed a grassy moorland, dotted with thatch-roofed cottages wherein dwelt the joyous peasants of Asano.

Where the highway rounded an escarpment a youth drew rein, and gazed wistfully upon the scene. He was now returning, after years of absence, to the home of his childhood.

Struck by the grandeur of this ancestral domain, a vague, unwonted sense of aloofness oppressed him. He wondered whether Camellia would be changed from the rompling little playfellow, so winsome in all her moods, to whom he had been betrothed in infancy.

Of a sudden a short, shrill whistle rent the air. It was their signal in the long ago. Upon the bough of a twisted pine, whither she had so often clambered in her boyish girlhood, sat Camellia, her little feet flitting in and out of covert, like timorous birds. A flame leaped and died on her dusky cheeks. A smile blossomed a moment, then faded from her lips. Her jade-blue eyes sought the youth‘s questioningly.

“Camellia!“ he cried, joyously, “I am come to claim thy love!“

“All the morning Shikara, have I been watching for thee,“ she smiled shyly. “Why didst thou ride so slowly?“

“Beloved, I came as swiftly as my steed could gallop. Tell me,“ he pleaded. “Hast thou longed for me as I for thee? Art thou content that I have come?“

With a faint cry she nestled in his arms, her eyes brimming with joy:

“Content indeed, for I love thee more than life.“

Shikara felt the tumultuous beating of her heart. Her sweet breath fanned his cheek. The assurance of requited love swept away all barriers of wealth and caste that lay between them.

“Longer than life,“ he vowed, “shall my love for thee endure.“

Onward they rode, their hearts athrill with a joy hitherto undreamed, all unconscious of the tragedy enacted by their fathers.

The moorland gleamed silver in the morning sunshine, the hills loomed lazuli beneath lowering clouds. A hush brooded over all the countryside, broken only by the cawing of rooks, and a myriad feathered creatures flying frantically to shelter.

But little heed paid the lovers to these doomful cries, nor did vain foreboding cloud their bliss. They babbled of childish trifles: the familiar objects they passed, the cave where they played at pirates, and the cliff they had often scaled in search of cormorant eggs.

A turn of the road brought Ako again into view.

“Dost thou not love its time-stained walls?“ asked Camellia.

A moment before he would have answered: “I hate it, since it bars me from thee.“

But now her love had transfigured the grim old castle. Its great gate opened in whole-souled welcome; its massive walls spelled protection and hospitality.

“I love it,“ Shikara answered, “since it bars me in with thee.“

“But why are the villages so silent, the farms deserted?“ he asked; “no smoke wreaths rising from the cottages, no fishing boats upon the bay?“

“Kira hath forced the peasants to leave their homes and labour in the mines,“ she said sadly.

Suddenly a furious gust of wind smote the overhanging trees till they writhed like accursed spirits.

“Shikara! I am aifrighted,“ she shuddered. “Some terrible evil bodeth.“

“Nay,“ he laughed, “what evil may befall while I am at thy side?“

The youth spurred his steed forward; but ere they could reach the castle-gate a horseman overtook them.

“Art thou of the household, little rose-blossom?“ he demanded leering upon Camellia with lustful eyes.

“Insolent knave, this is the Lady of Ako!“ Shikara retorted, hand upon hilt.

“I would thy words were sooth,“ laughed Kira, “for I am Lord of Ako!“

“When my Lord Asano returneth he will dispute that claim,“ flared the youth haughtily.

“He hath disputed his last claim,“ sneered Kira. “The castle now is mine.“

Camellia went suddenly white.

“Nay, do not take it so hard, my pretty, thou hast but to accept my love and thou shalt remain Lady of Ako.“

“Dastard!“ cried the youth, dismounting swiftly. Kira drove his spurs deep into the flanks of his steed. As the powerful stallion reared above him with distended nostrils and threatening hoofs, Shikara struck it across the face with his riding whip. The charger swerved suddenly and flung his rider violently to the ground.

Clambering heavily to his feet the daimio strove to draw his sword; but Shikara, with a trick of jujutsu, tripped him suddenly. Kira stumbled and fell. Ere he could recover the youth sprang to the saddle.

Lightning flashed, a peal of thunder rent the heavens. Camellia crouched shuddering behind her lover.

“Fear not, Dear One,“ he whispered, “the clouds will swiftly flee.“

IV
MY SWORDS

Within my treasure house a casket lies,
    And shut therein two dragons writhe and moan;
    As I keep vigil in the night alone
My spirit is tormented with their cries.

Be still my swords. Alas! not yet, not yet.
    The day of vengeance dawns; ye need not fear,
    Inexorably swift it draweth near.
Be still nor deem that e'er I shall forget!

PEAKE-KIMURA.

The next day Kurano confirmed the evil tidings; bidding the lonely orphan come to Yedo and share his home.

"Father," entreated Shikara, "since Camellia and I love each other may we not now be wedded?"

"Graver duties now confront us," confided Kurano. "It is written: 'A man may not live under the same heaven with the murderer of his friend."

"Wilt thou slay him?" gasped the youth.

"Verily he shall die; but this is not the hour. A thousand samurai guard him night and day, while we have scarce six score. Nathless shall I bide my time!"

To all observers it appeared that he had forgotten his oath. He dismissed the samurai of Asano, seventy of whom sought service under new masters. Two score and seven, however, remained loyal, meeting secretly at a mountain camp where Kurano unfolded his plan.

"Let us bide our time," he counselled, "till Kira deem all danger past, when we shall more surely compass his death."

Each conspirator signed the compact with his blood and as symbol of allegiance bound about his arm a silken scarlet thread. Full well each warrior knew the certain penalty. Though enjoined by ancient custom, avenging murder was punishable by death.

Having sworn vengeance they parted, wandering throughout the lands as ronins (masterless men), maintaining themselves as best they might. Coolies, fishermen, and porters, they plied their menial tasks, patiently biding their time.

Their arms having been confiscated, they fabricated helmets, bucklers, and swords. A thieves' patter enabled them to communicate with one another and peddlers bore their messages.

Disguised as servants they listened to the secret councils of Kira and reported all to Kurano.

Kira immured himself in his yashiki. The great gate was flanked by strong guardhouses. About a central courtyard loomed the barracks. A labyrinth of corridors led to the vast audience hall patrolled by vigilant guards. A band of archers on the roof commanded all the courtyards. Thus stoutly defended, how could the ronins hope to take the yashiki?

When Kira fared abroad mounted samurai surrounded him with a wall of steel. At hoard he was served by armed retainers, and "drank his wine through helmet barred." Day and night lie wore chain-mail beneath his broidered robe. A lurking fear of sudden death stalked ever at his side, banishing sleep from his sunken eyelids.

''Golden wine in a silver bowl
Is true contentment to the soul.
A Geisha maid with lustrous eyes
Is true contentment to the wise.
Then dance and drink for man is meant
To laugh and love and be content!"

Months dragged by and the ronins gave no sign. To all seeming they had vanished from the face of the earth.

Kurano sought to lull Kira into a sense of security. He feigned the life of a drunkard. Abandoning wife and children he frequented the Yoshiwara.

Ishi surprised him one evening roystering amid a troop of geisha.

Tearfully she pleaded, "Come back with me my husband. Hast thou forgotten, when our first-born babe died, how affliction only bound us more closely? No sorrow can be too great for us to face together."

"Get thee gone, old hag," Kurano retorted, tossing down a bowl of sake. "By Benten, I am weary of thee. Here be pretty maids aplenty. These be my sweethearts!"

LAUGHTER, SAKE, AND SONG.

"How true the saying of the olden age
Of sages, now whose learned lips are dust,
Who gave to sake blest the name of 'Sage.'
Drink ere ye crumble too to common rust!

Better than futile mouthings of the wise
Is sake sweet, beloved of all good men.
Drink while ye may! The golden moment flies,
Once flown, you ne'er the cup may sip again.

Who loves not sake, song, and women sweet,
Remaineth all his life a beggar blind.
Who such an one I sometimes sadly meet,
Scarce better than an ape this fool I find.

What worth are priceless gems and treasures rare,
Or all the gold of Ophir shining bright?
Can they with one small sake cup compare
To banish care and summon sure delight?

So long as in my hand I hold the key
To open wide the door of life's glad feast,
What boots it though the future fate decree
That I become an insect or a beast?

If in another form, another life,
Aught else but man, I rather then would be
A sake-jar, my heart with gladness rife,
Though wrought from earth I hold the heavens in me!"
YAKAMOCHI.

"Surely, dear husband, thou art mad," bemoaned Ishi. "Grief for thy friend hath crazed thy mind."

"Art thou not afeared to live with a madman?" laughed Kurano.

"Nay, beloved Lord, I fear thee not. Cruelty and unkindness are foreign to thy nature. Come, let me take thee home!"

Kurano smiled for a moment in his old, loving way:

"Thou art a noble soul," he whispered, then resumed his raving.

"Canst thou give me back my dead Asano, whom I loved more than wife or child? Canst thou efface the memory of his murder? These hands dealt the death-blow that he might not linger in agony. With his own sword I severed his dear head. It rolled a little way, then gazed upon me with wide reproachful eyes. I lifted it, the lips quivered as though they whispered. I listened but the lips were silent. Then I wrapped it in my robe and fled. Alas! my beloved Asano, thou wilt ne'er return!" He droned a plaintive rune:

"Fate with her changing tune
Keeps her appointed time,
Her ever breaking thread
For ever spinning,
We who are singing, soon

Will cease to rhyme,
Our moment will be sped…"
JOHN MASEFIELD.

V

SNOW LANTERNS

How sad his heart as slowly he departed

Far from his home, where oft his feet had trod

Through the deep snow of fallen cherry blossoms,
Far from Harima, where on autumn nights
He donned the red brocade of maple leaflets.
Despondent now, his mind could dwell on naught
But thought of home, of wife, and child beloved,
Whose future loomed so sinister and dark.
KOJIMA.

One bitter evening as Camellia crouched over the hibachi, the shoji were thrust suddenly aside and Kurano staggered in.

With a trill of joyful recognition she ran to greet him, then shrank back in dismay—Kurano was drunk!

"Where is fam'ly?" he asked thickly.

"Mother has gone to Yedo and Shikara not yet returned from work. The children are playing in the garden."

"Ho, Take!" called Kurano. "What mischief art thou about? Burying thy brother in the snow? Faith, 'tis a pretty game. Let me play it with you," and he sallied forth. "Lo we will make each others' funeral lanterns."

Camellia watched with vague misgiving.

“Lanterns of the dead! an evil omen,“ she shuddered. Kurano was not as drunk as he seemed, for he worked with the skill of a stone carver, chiselling his lantern with bold strokes, to the unbounded delight of the boys.

Shouts of uproarious hilarity resounded from the garden.

Shaking the snow from his straw coat Shikara entered.

“Father is here!“ he exclaimed eagerly.

“His body is here,“ sighed Camellia, “his soul hath not yet returned from its wandering.“

Kurano entered erect of bearing and clear of speech. Camellia gazed upon him in wide-eyed wonder.

“Father,“ rejoiced Shikara, “thou hast come at last!“

“O lad of little faith,“ he reproached gently, “didst thou not divine that my madness was but a ruse to deceive Kira?“

“Thanks be to the gods,“ cried the youth. “Wilt thou not give Camellia a father‘s blessing? May we not wed when fall the cherry blossoms?“

“Alas!“ he sighed. “I fear it may not be.“ lie pointed to the snow-lanterns. “The monuments of men outlast their lives,“ he said solemnly. “Ere the camellias flower thy lantern and thy life may alike have vanished.“

“Grant us hope,“ Shikara besought, “if only for a winter‘s day.“

> “Then hope one little blissful hour
> Brief as the fleeting dew,
> Though she henceforth like some frail flower

Yearn endlessly for you."

Murmured the father, joining their hands in blessing.

Amidst the silver-lichened branches light
Singeth the nightingale: "Lo, spring hath come!"
Perchance it dreams—mistaking snowflakes white
For wind-blown blossoms of the burgeoned plum.
Sosei.

Thus carolled Camellia as she went to meet her lover. Snow had fallen. Bare boughs and tiny twigs gleamed as with a burden of blossoms.

"Spring will soon be here," smiled the maid, her heart filled with ineffable joy.

The plangent boom of a monastery bell echoed through the wood. Its solemn notes died mournfully away. A thud of galloping hoofs suddenly hammered the ground.

Camellia leaped behind a tree, as a troop of horsemen rushed from the forest.

Springing to earth they dragged her from hiding, and threw her swooning into a norimon.

Shikara waited in bitter apprehension. Why had Camellia failed to keep the tryst? Had some unknown peril encompassed her? He strode swiftly forward hoping each moment to glimpse her smiling face.

Then he came to a clearing where the fresh fallen snow was mired by trampling feet. Presently he discerned prints of little cloven tabi. Following these, half hidden in the snow, he found a maiden's clog.

Assailed by dire forebodings he hurried home.

"Where is Camellia?" he cried distractedly.

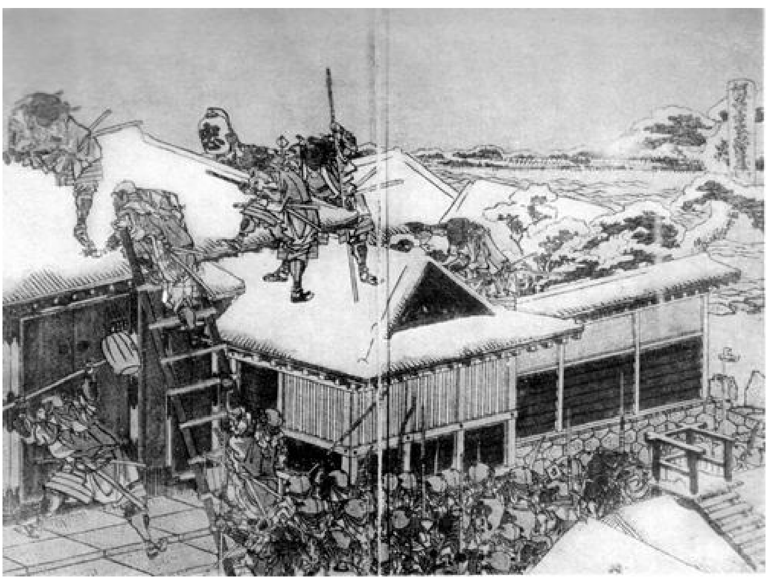
"Didst thou not meet her?" gasped his mother.

"Is this her geta?" he demanded, displaying the tiny clog.

"Of a surety Shikara. Behold the band is broken I mended yestreen."

The youth ran to the garden. "Father," he cried, "Kira hath rapt Camellia! Now is the time to strike!"

He lifted from the tokonoma the blood-stained sword of Asano. Raising the blade reverently to his forehead he prayed:



"Half the band clambered over the roofs, while Kurano forced the Water Gate" Reproduced from "The Faithful," by John Masefield



“Instantly Shikara loomed above him, his blade flashing like a lightning-bolt“
From “Old-World Japan,“ by T. H. Robinson

“Dread Amida! Grant me the honour of washing away these stains in the blood of Kira!“

VI

RETRIBUTION

> The time dragged by till our hearts were broken,
> The time dragged by till we cursed the sun;
> Now the hour has struck and the word is spoken.
> The time is fallen and the deed begun.
>
> JOHN MASEFIELD.

Cautious taps on darkened shoji, hurried whisperings at doors held stealthily ajar, and the forty-seven, gathered for the attack, tramped grimly through the thick-fallen snow.

At a few paces from the yashiki they halted, while Kurano alone approached the great gate. Without, retainers holding their lords‘ horses and litter-bearers stamping to keep themselves warm, thronged the courtyard. Within, lights glittered, servitors ran to and fro, and from encircling galleries lute, samisen, and laughter broke upon the winter night.

“Kira holds high revel,“ he warned. “We must wait until the drunkards have departed and the household is wrapped in slumber. Then half our band shall clamber over the roofs while I will force the water-gate.“

“How can I wait?“ cried Shikara. “While he carouses with his boon companions, Camellia is still safe; but after—. Let me go to her upon the instant!“

“They might deem thee a guest wert thou fittingly garbed,“ mused Kurano, “but thine armour will betray thee.“

The youth drew from his saddlebag a gilt encrusted robe.

“Tis well, my son,“ assented the father, “but beware to attack Kira until I give the sign. I will sound my horn when we have overpowered the guards at the water-gate.“

Having donned the broidered robe above his lacquered mail, Shikara made his way unchallenged to the lofty banquet-hall. Behind the dais, where Kira was enthroned before a group of parasites, crouched the youth silently biding his opportunity.

Overcome with sake a roysterer lumbered against the tokonoma, crashing its sacred images to the floor.

Kira went suddenly white.

Drawing his sword, Shikara edged his way nearer and nearer the doomed man. An instant later a triumphant cry rang through the silent courtyard.

Guards and guests rushed madly forth.

Kira rose and met the relentless eyes of Shikara, a scornful sneer tightening his flabby lips.

They glared at each other like two mountain lions, the giant daimio towering over his diminutive antagonist.

Nearer and nearer, with stealthy step, crept the avenging youth. The smile of disdain upon the face of Kira widened to a snarl of rage. Like a stroke of lightening his sword flashed and fell!

Lithe as a serpent Shikara darted from beneath the descending blade, as its keen edge fleshed his left arm, from elbow to wrist.

Blind with pain the boy lunged blunderingly against his cool and watchful adversary.

With a sudden feint Kira caught him off his guard and, tripping his feet, threw him to the floor.

Ere he could recover the dastard dashed over his prostrate body into the open court.

Clambering dazedly to his feet, Shikara pursued his fleeing enemy through courtyard and palace, gallery, loft, and chamber, till he came to the garden of the geisha. Thrusting aside shrieking women, the youth rushed in, only to find it vacant.

Returning to the corridors he found himself confronted by a dozen lusty knaves. Fencing warily he was driven backward, step by step.

He had smitten two to earth, but the remainder were slowly closing in upon him. A halberd point had pierced his mail and he felt himself growing faint from loss of blood.

Suddenly the sound of a horn was heard, succeeded by the boom of a great battering ram. Kurano was charging through the water gate!

A clamour of shouts mingled with clash of steel and the youth‘s opponents fled.

All was silent save for the piteous cries of the geisha.

“Go,“ commanded Kurano loosing the bars of the great gate, and sounding the assembly.

Eagerly each ronin scanned his fellow, then bowed his head. No trace of Kira could be found. Their enterprise had failed!

“Lend a torch,“ cried Shikara, and bent himself to scrutiny of a plan.

But as his finger traced chamber after chamber the ronins swore they had made the rounds of all.

“Have you searched this building?“ demanded the youth pointing to a “go-down,“ near the outer wall.

“There is no door by which we may enter,“ protested the ronins.

“Then will we make one,“ declared Shikara. Followed by the band the youth stole down a corridor, tapping the walls cautiously with his hands.

As he pressed the frame of an ancient painting the panel yielded, revealing an opening through which a man might pass.

Climbing through the screen, the youth found himself in a cloistered garden. Upon its snow-strewn pathways he discerned footprints, which led to the storehouse, hidden behind a thicket of tall bamboo.

Forcing the heavy door he entered. In the sooty darkness half-concealed beneath a pile of charcoal crouched a white-robed form.

“Come forth, murderer,“ cried Shikara, but the cowering figure only shrunk more deeply into the gloom.

The youth prodded the heap with his halberd.

Crying for mercy knelt the craven Kira.

Inexorably the ronins led him to the Judgment Chamber. Respectfully as became his exalted station Kurano addressed the condemned daimio.

“We are the followers of Lord Asano, sworn to avenge our master‘s unjust death. It is my duty, Lord Kira, to command you to perform seppuku.“

But the trembling prisoner gave no answer. Again the demand was repeated and a sword extended to him.

He snatched the dirk and aimed a treacherous thrust at Kurano, which the latter parried; then, springing through the doorway, Kira strove to save himself by flight.

Instantly Shikara loomed above him. His blade flashed like a lightning-bolt, and from Kira‘s severed head a “Scarlet Thread“ reddened the snow-white pebbles of the court!

VII

THE BREAKING OF THE THREAD

The Heart of a Samurai

The snow-flowers frail are falling cold and white,
Athwart thin pines the pallid moonlight gleams,
Slanting its frosty rays in fitful streams
Upon the dark brocade of winter night.
A loveliness endues the mountain-height
Born of the drifting mist of dying dreams;
So to my frost-bound heart all living seems
But ghosts of vanished blooms of vain delight.

Sorrow and Joyance, Fear and Hate and Love,
Phantoms of faded blossoms cold and stark,
Blown to that endless Nothing whence they came,
Melting like snow-flowers falling from above
Beneath the ruthless rays of Noon‘s red flame,
Thus flares our light a little—then is dark.

Soon shall a scarlet-thread pollute my sword
And give my earthly spirit back to Death;
But, though my body be bereft of breath,
Still shall my deathless Soul protect my Lord.
KATSUTOMO.

Wiping his blade upon the robe of the dead daimio, Shikara hurried forth in quest of Camellia.

The stillness of death brooded over the vast yashiki. White and silent the murdered guards lay before the open gate.

The youth made his way through the dim, deserted galleries. A gust of wind chilled him to the bone as he entered a frost-bound garden. A wan moon threw its Blue-White beams upon the muffled forms of flowers. Frozen lilies bent their fragile stalks burdened with wealth of mimic bloom.

An ancient quatrain came to his mind:

> The lilies shrouded lie beneath the snow,
> So deep we may no trace of them behold;
> But still their presence we may surely know,
> Their fragrance fadeth not, though dead and cold.
> TSURAYUKI (KOKINCHIU).

A great stone lantern threw its ghostly ray upon a maiden‘s snow-shrouded form.

“Camellia,“ he cried, a cruel foreboding gripping his heart.

Silent and motionless she lay in the drifting snow, a scarlet ribbon fluttering from her throat.

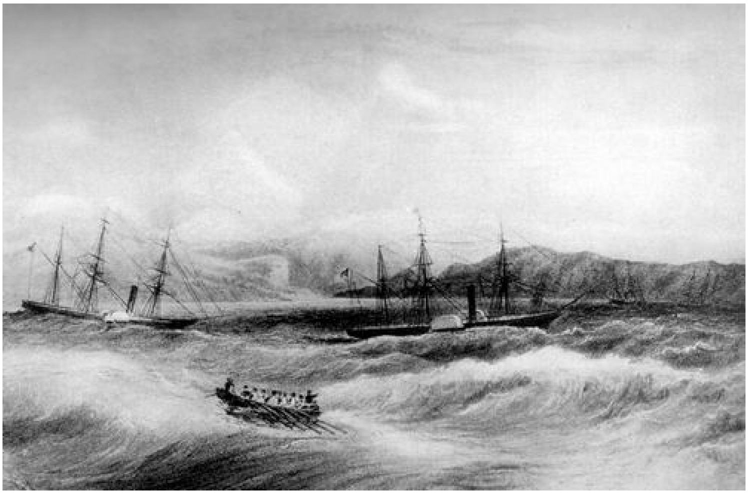
Clasping her in his arms Shikara strained her to with the strength of inexorable hope.

A poniard fell from her hand. She uttered a low moan. A smile blossomed on her lips, then swiftly faded and was gone.

A flurry of snow petals fell upon her flower-white face.

“Grieve not, Beloved,“ whispered Shikara. “I shall clasp thy spirit as I clasp thy body!“

He sank upon his sword and a great darkness came over him.



"Perry's fleet lay at anchor in the storm-lashed bay and I hopefully boarded the 'Susquehanna'"
Narrative of Expedition to Japan, by Commodore M. C. Perry. W. Heine. U.S. Government Report.

"Beyond the mist-shrouded horizon,



Where hills and rice fields merge looms the snow-white cone of Fujiyama"

Snow Blossoms

As fall the silent snowflakes to the ground,
So drifts my soul unto the ceaseless night
Of life's relentless winter stark and white,
Where Time is not nor Light nor any sound,
Only an endless silence all around,
Ruthless Nirvana, cold and infinite,
Eternal nothing, void of love's delight—
Is thus my worn out thread of life unwound.

Wherefore as falls a fragile frosted flower
Beneath the crushing weight of winter's blast,
Break now my thread of life this hour!
May it not be that there behind the sky,
Snow-blossoms falling, falling from on high,
The spring, the long-longed spring, hath come at last?

SHIKISHI-FUKAYABA.

AFTERWORD

Dauntlessly the forty-seven paid with their own hands the death-penalty.

Upon the grave of their lord they laid the head of Kira, praying:

"Spirit of our dead master! We come this day to cheerfully lay down our lives. We who have eaten thy bread could not live under the same heaven nor tread the same earth with the enemy of our lord!"

CHAPTER XI

THE OPEN GATE

I

THE GRAND OLD MAN

IT was in the fall of 1852 that I, Dave Hazard, foreign correspondent of the *American Republic,* received the following letter:

NEW YORK, November 21.

MY DEAR HAZARD:

You have probably heard that Commodore Perry has sailed on his diplomatic expedition to Japan.

The press has exhausted every means in its power to obtain permission to send correspondents with the fleet, but the Government has rigorously refused.

However, yours truly proposes to scoop his rival brothers of the ink-well, in the following manner. With the enclosed passports and letter of credit sail immediately to Bombay. Thence overland to Calcutta,—two months ought to make it. Then by mail steamer to Shanghai, where we figure the fleet will anchor about the middle of May.

Present credentials to Commodore Perry, and obtain some sort of commission on his flag-ship. If you get the *Republic* in first you can have any place on the staff. You are a live-wire and your linguistic attainments fit you admirably for the post.

We depend upon you to succeed. Stoker or cabin-boy, it does not matter what, but get something. If the “old man“ is obdurate go as a stowaway. Stay not on the manner of your going but go!

WILLIAM NUTLEY,

Editor-in-Chief.

I followed instructions but reached Shanghai, too late. Perry had just sailed for Japan!

By good luck, however, I found a Japanese fishing-craft bound for the Loo-Choo Islands and bribed the captain to give me passage.

After a nasty voyage on the treacherous Yellow Sea we sighted the island of Oshima. Perry‘s fleet lay at anchor in the palm-fringed bay.

Presenting my credentials I hopefully boarded the *Susquehanna.* But to all my eloquence “the grand old man“ turned a deaf ear.

In vain I urged him to accept me as interpreter, since I possessed a rudimentary knowledge of the Japanese language.

“Do you not see, Commodore, that I can be of vital service?“ I persisted; “I have, moreover, a friend at Nagasaki, who will present me to the Shogun, on whose favour the treaty depends.“

He reflected a moment and my hopes soared only to crash suddenly to the ground.

“Impossible,“ he blurted with finality.

“Very well“ I shrugged; “if you have no use for me I shall go on my own account. Should I secure the Shogun‘s consent to the treaty, may I infer you would not be altogether displeased?

"I wish you success and shall be glad to hear the outcome of your venture," he smiled, "but are you aware how they treat 'Foreign Devils' here?" He drew his finger across his throat with a significant sound. "Will you not relinquish this reckless plan?"

"Never," I insisted; "a fool and his folly are ill parted!"

"Damned if I don't like your pluck!" he laughed, wringing my hand.

II

FALSE FRIEND AND FRIENDLY FOE

Ephemera

Beneath her broidered robe of satin rare,
Bound by an obi tied in a great bow,
White, cloven-stockinged feet flit to and fro,
Like butterflies a flutter in the air.
While, from the lustrous lacquer of her hair,
And pallid oval face and forehead low
Her eyes, twin jets within a lake of snow,
Gleam gladly forth, with glances debonair.

A fleeting flower, abloom for our delight,
A winged essence from a blither sky,
Born but to blossom for a single night,
Then swift to fade into the realm of gloom.
But not in vain thy bright ephemeral bloom,
Thy fragrance lingers still in memory!

The day was deadly sultry. Suddenly out of a vivid cobalt sky came a torrential tropic downpour.

The glad little hills gleamed green and glossy like Della Robbia enamels, then faded grey and leaden like Hiroshige prints. Again the sun blazed forth revealing the rain-washed landscape.

Hard by, a vermilion temple unsheathed its sword-like roof. Beyond, a grassy moor-land ribboned by a silver stream rolled away to coral crags, floating mid sky and sea.

Down a tortuous trail rode a cavalcade. Stalwart spearmen strode in advance bearing plumed lances, crying as they came:

“Make way for his exalted Highness, the august daimio of Satsuma!“

I drew aside to allow the troop to pass; when, to my surprise, riding by the side of the daimio I recognized my old friend Van Zwyn.

“By all the gods!“ I greeted; “you are the very man I am looking for!“

But the fat Dutchman gave me only a cold and glassy stare.

“Does not the Honourable Hollander recognize the Hairy Barbarian?“ I asked, extending my hand.

“I never saw you before in my life,“ retorted Van Zwyn, scorning my proffered courtesy.

Astonishment, anger, and chagrin rankled within me. I could not believe he had failed to recognize me. Why did the cad disdain my acquaintance?

“Quit joking,“ I laughed; “you know me well enough. What is the meaning of all this pretence?“

“It means,“ he frowned, “that Holland does not intend to share her monopoly with the United States. Give yourself up to me peaceably and I will send you home; or else I will deliver you to my friend the Daimio and the delights of Japanese torture!“

Cutting him across the face with my riding whip I cried:

“Swine of a Dutchman, take that for an answer.“

In a flash he drew his revolver and fired! The bullet whizzed by my ear wounding a samurai, who slashed at me blindly with his halberd.

Wrenching it from him, I belaboured the rascal roundly.

A second samurai rode to his assistance. I struck the sword from his hand.

On came another. I sent him reeling with a crash on the head.

The fourth I gored in the gorget. Then, hurling the spear in his face, I struck the rowels into my pony and galloped down the road.

There was a pounding of hoofs behind. A shot rang out and my bridle hand hung limp.

My pony raced on through the gathering dusk. I looked back. The entire troop were after me, Van Zwyn riding in advance.

A volley of shots! My little steed bolted like a hunted hare.

I drew away from my pursuers. All but Van Zwyn, who gained rapidly upon me.

I waited till he was abreast, then, turning in my saddle, aimed at his eyes.

He went suddenly white. He had emptied his revolver and realized that he was at my mercy.

I thought of our old student days as I pulled the trigger, and shot his horse through the chest.

Mount and rider fell in a huddled heap.

Up an avenue of palms I rushed to a little yashiki.

I thrust the shoji aside and entered.

A girl raised her child-like face questioningly to mine. With a low sibilation she sank like a wave until her charming nose touched the mat.

“Ohayo, Honourable Foreign Debble!“ she smiled enchantingly.

Taking both her hands I raised her gently. Then catching sight of my bleeding wrist:

“Goddess of Light!“ she shivered; “what those bloodeys? Speak! You enjoy honourable suffering. Sweet Shaka! What cruel barbarian done that?“

Instantly she raised my hand to her lips and sucked the blood from the wound. Then, tearing a strip from her kimono, she bandaged it tenderly, crooning the while as a mother to a sleepless babe.

Suddenly a rapping resounded at the shoji.

Pointing to a ladder, “Quick, make honourable hurryings,“ she whispered.

Scarcely had I mounted to the loft when, with a shattering of shoji a troop of samurai clattered in.

“Most Honourable Princess,“ fawned Van Zwyn, “I have strong suspicions that a certain Tojin spy is hiding here.“

Bamboo Blossom laughed nervously:

“Ha! ha! Spy-Tojin. How that is funny, ha! ha! I din‘ see nobodys excep Swine Dutch Tojin!“

“But he was seen to enter,“ insisted the Hollander.

“I‘m sorry but I must search.“

She gave a sudden gasp, then recovering:

“All light,“ she laughed, “I don‘ keer liddle bit.“

The samurai ransacked the room from end to end.

Setsu San turned triumphantly upon the intruder:

“Now you satisfy, you fooel? Tha‘s what I say, nobody‘s home!“

His brows knitted in a vicious frown:

“Evidently not,“ he grunted. Then, his eyes lighting upon the ladder, “Search the loft,“ he thundered.

The light of battle glinted in her eyes. She struck her fan against her palm:

“Shimadzu,“ she cried sharply.

A mild-faced youth entered quietly.

“Make searchings, brother,“ she commanded. “Tell those Honourable Dutch swine Setsu San is liar! Tell him she make hidings bad Hairy Barbarian in bedrooms.“

The youth bowed. A faint smile of comprehension flamed, then went. He climbed the ladder and gazed at me with wide, appealing eyes.

Placing his finger upon his lips he smiled significantly, then clambered down.

“There is no one!“ he asserted calmly.

“Did you search thoroughly?“ questioned Van Zwyn sternly.

“Everywhere, Honoured Tojin,“ the youth insisted. The Dutchman mumbled a clumsy apology.

“Make goings,“ cried Bamboo Blossom, “your Honourable companys not desire is. You are permit to withdraw.“

A clank of mailed feet. The shoji clattered angrily and all was still.

I waited till night-fall, then began to descend the ladder, when a little hand pressed my lips:

“Sh—sh!“ she warned, “bad Swine Dutchman make moon - shine - prowling outsides. Goon nighty,“ she smiled, “Nize dream, sweet res till sunbeam!“

I clasped her tenderly and kissed her in true American fashion.

She trembled like a frightened bird:

“You loaf me liddle bit?“ she questioned timorously.

“More than life!“ I whispered.

“Fare bye, beeg beautiful Foreign Debbie,“ she laughed, “Peace sleep till sunbeams.“

III

THE INN OF HAPPY MEETINGS

> The traveller from far-off foreign land,
> The friend, his long-lost friend to gladly greet,
> Fare to and fro, a blithe and motley band,
> Upon the hill where, wending hand in hand
> Beneath the moon, the smiling lovers meet.
>
> (SEMI MARU.)

Disguised as a daimio travelling nebon I journeyed safely to Kioto.

Entering the inn, where a party of Hatamotos were carousing, I fell into the arms of Van Zwyn, gloriously exhilarated with sake.

Feigning forgetfulness of our late quarrel, he slapped me effusively upon the back, insisting that I should drink with him.

Fearing that refusal might result in a brawl, I invited him to share my supper.

He hiccoughed a maudlin farewell to his companions and staggered up the stairway.

"Good fellowsh," he spluttered, "but fishus, too damn off —off — vicious."

"Yes, vicious officials, "I volunteered sympathetically.

"Letsh make night of it," he gurgled, "Drinksh all on me, Hap Hazhard. Order whasher like for shelf, but for me oceans of sake."

"What brings you to Kioto?" I questioned, as a maid brought the desired lubricant.

"Sush a lark!" he laughed draining his sake at a gulp. "Lishen Hap Hazhard, old boy. Been sent for by Shon-of-a-gun — thash a joke, shee point?"

"The Shogun?" I ventured.

"Yes, Slowgun," he corrected, "wansh me to translate letter from Presh-agent United States. Jush your job, Hap Hashhouse, Press Agent Fillmore. Nishe name, fill glash more," suiting the action to the word. "Nishe job if thash all hash do, eh what?"

"Yes," I assented enviously, "it might be the nucleus of great achievement."

“Thash sho,“ he laughed, caught by the unfamiliar term, “a nukelus, ha! ha! shush a nukelus!“ and babbling a ribald song fell sweetly into Nirvana.

A pock-faced Hatamoto entering eyed us doubtfully. All foreign devils evidently looked alike to him.

“Which Honourable Tojin,“ he asked, “is the Shogun‘s interpreter?“

Van Zwyn opened a bleary eye, mumbling drowsily, “Too Vicious, too damn vicious.“

“Give your message to me, Officer,“ I bluffed, shading the light that he might not note my face.

“The Honourable Interpreter should not forget that in the morning we must make an early start.“

“True enough,“ I promised, “I will be ready.“

Kowtowing obsequiously the Hatamoto withdrew.

Van Zwyn, rolling upon the matting grunted:

“Yesh, ol‘ fishy, call me early, Mother Dear, goin‘ be Queen of the May!“ and snoring stertorously, relapsed into oblivion!

Running through his pockets, I appropriated his credentials and left him to sleep off his debauch.

The night was filled with plaintive strains of samisen. ‘Through the garden trees I could see a bridal couple drinking the nuptial sake.

Laughter and song, clatter of cups and rap of pipes upon hibahi resounded from neighbouring tea-houses.

The youth bent over the girl and whispered something. She knelt upon the floor, clapping her hands and droned a prayer.

The lanterns were extinguished; I threw myself upon the mats and felt asleep dreaming that I was the youth and the maiden O Setsu San in a moonlight of mother-of-pearl.

Dreams

O wondrous magic of the Nippon night!
When, like a ghostly galley, silently
The crescent moon sailed down the cloudless sky
And from the slumbrous earth rose laughter light
With whisperings of love mid lanterns' bright,
Burning before old shrines innumerably;
We were alone together you and I
Breathless and mute with wonder and delight.
Out of the past there floateth through the gloom
The click of clogs upon the pavement white
And sigh of samisen in booths above,
With intermingled scent of cherry-bloom.
O wondrous magic of the Nippon night,
When through the darkness gleamed the light of love!
(After YONE NOGUCHI.)

IV

THE PUPPET SHOW

Lurking behind a screen in majestic isolation the Shogun watched the marionettes, while unknown to all I craftily pulled the strings.

Throned upon a dais between the Princes of Owari and Satsuma sat the Gotairo,[1] cold, impassive, and inscrutable. Ranged about the walls of the great chamber crouched the bright-robed daimios of the realm.

[1] The Gotairo, the Shogun's representative and chief executive.

"August Council of Elders," greeted the Gotairo, "we are gathered here to take council concerning a grave and unknown menace. The

sacrilegious Tojin threatens to profane our sacred land, so long protected by the ancient code of Ieyasu."

Lifting from a rose-wood casket a vellum document bearing the seal of the United States:

"Behold the message!" cried the Gotairo.

"Let it be heard," rumbled the assembly in unison.

Taking the paper I carefully translated:

Millard Fillmore, President of the United States of America, to his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Japan, Great and Good Friend:

I send this letter by Commodore Matthew C. Perry (a naval officer of the highest rank) to propose to your Majesty that the United States and Japan should live in friendship and have commercial intercourse with each other."

"These be but idle pretensions," stormed Satsuma.

"Beware, the Tojins plot to invade Dai Nippon and reinstate the Evil Sect!"

A muttered imprecation rose from the hundred daimios.

"'Tis false!" I cried, meeting their eyes unflinchingly. "The Constitution and laws of the United States," I read, "forbid all interference with the political and religious concerns of other nations!"

A hush of incredulous surprise fell over the assembly.

"Your Highness," flashed Satsuma, "I challenge the accuracy of the translation! Who is this interpreter?"

“The official expert from Nagasaki,“ affirmed the Gotairo, imperturbably.

“Nevertheless,“ stammered Satsuma, momentarily bewildered, “He is an impostor!“

The Gotairo smiled inscrutably.

“Are you perchance aware,“ sneered the Prince, “that he is an American spy?“

“Preposterous,“ scoffed the Gotairo. “Your accusations are groundless.“

Satsuma bowed defeat. “On the morrow,“ he muttered, “your Highness shall have proof.“

“Meanwhile,“ resumed the Gotairo, “if you still doubt the validity of this translation, know that it has been verified by the Chinese linguist Hayashi.“

Thereupon a grave, goggled gentleman, salaaming profoundly, announced: “The transcription of the Honourable Interpreter is unassailably exact.“

I could not forbear a smile of triumph as Satsuma sank chin upon breast.

“Why is it,“ I demanded, “that you have granted to Holland a commercial monopoly? The Americans are a wealthier people than the Dutch; might it not be to your advantage to trade with them?“

Mutterings of dissent ran through the chamber. “We have no need of the Tojin‘s money,“ protested Satsuma, “nor will we barter our honour for their filthy trade.“

“Nor their long guns and great, black ships?“ I smiled.

“Might we not rather buy their weapons, that we may arm ourselves against them?“ suggested Mito.

“Precisely,“ I assented, “should you ratify the Treaty!“ The Shogun clicked his fan and passed the Gotairo a letter.

Pressing it to his forehead he read:

“In the last famine, our people perished by thousands, Korea possessed food in abundance, which the Ieyasu rendered us powerless to purchase. Let us arm ourselves against such disaster by revoking this law!‘‘

Satsuma knitted his brows. Had another than the Shogun made such a demand he might have assented; but fighting to the last he thundered! “The Code of Ieyasu is immutable!“

Immutable as fate,“ echoed the puppet daimios.

I waited till their uproar subsided, then resumed my reading:

“We know that your ancient laws do not allow foreign trade; but as the world changes it seems wise to make new laws. If your Majesty is not satisfied to entirely abrogate ancient decrees they might be suspended for a temporary period.“

Satsuma reiterated firmly:

“From the Code of Ieyasu there is no appeal!“

“Is permission given that ‘The Code‘ be consulted,“ I asked.

“Permission is granted,“ assented the Gotairo.

The Council waited in hushed expectancy.

A herald crept in on his knees bearing a time-stained scroll upon a tray.

“When in the course of time foreign nations beseech intercourse“ (I read), “the matter shall be deliberated in a council of the daimios and the Shogun may act as he deems best.

“Ancient customs may be modified as it becomes expedient. This is the Shogun‘s duty.“

“Ye have deliberated. Let the Shogun act!“

A sudden crash resounded through the chamber! The screen fell. Every man sprang to his feet, hand upon hilt!

In a movement as simultaneous they sank upon their knees with reverential sibilations like the rustling of windswept boughs.

The Shogun stood before us, his face transfigured by a wondrous fire:

“Sons of Nippon,“ he cried, “I have listened to the beating of your loyal hearts. I have heard how, rather than break our honoured ancient law, ye have with heroic devotion scorned the wealth of the foreigner; how with unflinching courage ye have suffered famine and pestilence, beholding your loved ones perish of hunger, rather than buy the stranger‘s bread.

“Ye have resolved in childish pride to pit our obsolete and worthless weapons against their invincible artillery, which will crush us as inevitably as the typhoon crushes a skiff. Shall we not rather arm ourselves with their resistless ‘weapons even as the immortal Ieyasu conquered his enemies by means of the Tojin devil dust?

“This opportunity is now offered us. We needs must form with the United States a pact for permanent peace!“

Ieyasu hath spoken,“ shouted the daimios. “He hath given thee power!“

Raising his hand in calm command Ieyoshi quelled the tumult:

“The spirit of my great ancestor stands before me,“ he smiled as one a-dream. “His hand is on mine own. He bids me sign the pact!“

V

THE CELL OF TORMENT

When cometh spring with footsteps light
And clotheth earth with verdure bright,
The songless birds with songs resound,
And cherry petals flood the ground.
So flowerless since ‘neath winter‘s white,
I scarce can bide the lovely sight,
So soon to pass into the night,
Of life perfected without blight,
When cometh spring.
Put in the winter-tide at night,
When earth is bathed in wan moonlight,
And fallen leaves drift o‘er the ground
With russet rustlings all around —
Then yearn I for the year‘s delight
When cometh spring

(OHOGIMI.)

A dull foreboding obsessed me as I rode from my lodging that drear March morning in quest of Setsu San.

In the sleety park, oblivious of discomfort, a white-haired artist was painting industriously.

“What maniac is this?“ I asked myself. Then suddenly I recognized the gentle enthusiast Hiroshige.

“A beautiful morning,“ he smiled, “amethyst and pearl!“

“Mire and murk,“ I muttered irritably.

“I can‘t hear a word you say,“ he shrilled, cupping his ear.

“Slush and gloom!“ I shouted, at the top of my lungs.

“Yes, yes,“ he piped, “the plum trees are in bloom, though we can scarcely see them. You remember the poem?

> “How shall I know the plum‘s white bloom,
> In the silver snow of the winter moon?
> By the fragrant breath of the frosty air,
> You shall know my fragile blossoms fair!“

Heartened, as by a stirrup cup, I resumed my ride.

Dusk was falling when I reached Satsuma yashiki. I inquired for Setsu San and the guard informed me that she was waiting at the “go-down.“

I hurried to the treasure-house. From its open doorway glimmered a vague light.

“Setsu San,“ I called, peering into the dusk.

But there was no answer. I entered cautiously. The great bronze door clanged behind me. I was caught like a rat in a trap.

I stumbled heavily, fell, and lay for hours, thirsty, and despondent, for, strive as I might, I could devise no means of escape.

A rasping voice broke the silence:

“I will not use the poniard. I will rush upon him and will break his neck!“

“No,“ protested the other; “stab him to the heart!“

“When?“ inquired the first stolidly.

“After the wrestling-match, when the Commodore shakes your hand.“

Incensed beyond control: “Coward!“ I cried, “let me out of this rat-trap!“

No, my dear friend,“ laughed Van Zwyn, “you will stay just where you are. You‘ve had your innings, Hazard, it‘s my turn now!“

Then, turning to the wrestler:

“Driving Wind! keep strict watch! At the hour of the rat he shall have a taste of Japanese torture.“

For hours I waited in suspense, eating my heart out with impotent despair.

The wrestler was not amenable to bribery. He was however, susceptible to drink and drained my flask, which I passed through a crevice in the floor.

All night he sang hilariously, but at last collapsed into sodden slumber.

Time was passing; I must act quickly, but how?

I looked about me. A lantern hung from the ceiling. An armour-chest stood beneath.

A bamboo pipe protruded through the floor. A gruesome tale of boiling to death in a bath flashed into my mind! I plugged the pipe with a tattered kimono, and waited for my fate.

The air grew foul. An odor of death filled the chamber. I became faint with nausea.

A monastery bell knelled its melancholy boom. Twice it struck, reverberating slowly to silence. "The hour of the rat!" I reflected hopelessly.

Suddenly the lantern swayed!

It seemed to me that the ceiling was descending.

With eyes starting from their sockets I strove to pierce the darkness.

A reiterant sound of wailing echoed in my ears.

Again I looked upward.

To my consternation the ceiling had lowered by nearly a foot.

A clammy sweat oozed from my every pore. Inch by inch, in a descent scarcely perceptible, through moments that seemed interminable, down and down it came.

The roots of my hair stirred as I realized that, do what I might, I could not escape my impending doom.

Down, unceasingly down it vibrated, tilting and swaying as it came.

I struggled to rise but a rigid paralysis held me fast.

Lower and lower, slowly but relentlessly it closed down upon me, till it was within a yard of my head.

In vain I strove to thrust it back; its inexorable weight crushed me to my knees.

I shut my eyes and prayed that a miracle might stay its irresistible descent.

Down, ever downward it crept, till it hovered just above my head.

I fell upon my face and shrieked in blind despair.

Suddenly it paused, held by the heavy chest!

A light flashed in my eyes! A voice called my name, and in the open doorway stood Setsu San!

"Quick, make hurryings!" she cried. "Here is the Khan, mos' swiftest horse in all Japan!"

I strained her to my heart, then leaped to saddle. "Ride like debble!" she laughed. "You gon' save those Perry daimio, then come back marry Setsu San!"

Striking spurs to flank I was off like the wind.

VI

A RIDE FOR LIFE

I galloped through a misty landscape like pictures on painted fans.

Old gnarled pines and thatch-roofed Shinto temples, billowy, green hillsides and level, flooded rice-fields whirled swiftly by. Scarcely a soul was yet abroad, save an occasional, straw-clad peasant leading a spare-ribbed pack-horse.

Far and near the country-side bloomed like a garden. The pools were thick with the spreading spatulas of the lotus, though not a solitary blossom yet peeped out.

Now and again I caught a glimpse of the shimmering sapphire sea. Then through a rent in the leaden cloud beyond the mist-shrouded horizon where hills and rice-fields merged, loomed a phantom mountain, pale, pure, and unearthly, the snow-white cone of Fujiyama.

I recalled an ancient poem:

The Mount of Fire

Betwixt Suruga and the land of Kai
Thou liftest, Fujiyama, thy white head!
The very clouds of heaven in reverent dread
Forbear to touch thy hoary summit high.
Even the tireless eagle, soaring nigh,
Fails to attain thy heart of burning red
Where ceaseless fires from hidden craters fed
On fields of endless snow flare fitfully.

Within thy heart a lake unfathomed lies
From which a river floweth joyously,
O'er far Yamato, land of fair sunrise,
Blessing her fruitful plains with glad increase,
Mountain of Fire, Father of pain and peace
Flame within ice, Devil and Deity!
ANON (MANYOSHIU).

A rain-drop whipped my face! A bolt of lightning flashed across the sky. I was riding before the wrath of the March monsoon.

Suddenly a bullet zipped above my head. Glancing backward I saw a troop of mailed samurai galloping upon my heels. I struck home the spurs; the Khan snorted and sprang forward like a thunderbolt.

A volley rang behind and the rain burst in torrents.

With the next flash I saw that I had gained slightly upon my pursuers. I spurred again, the Khan answered with a rush. Thoroughbred though he was, could he hold the pace?

I looked over my shoulder; the samurai were closing up! I could hear their muttered imprecations.

I pressed the Khan's flanks with my legs. He responded nobly, but his stride soon flagged. He had raced three miles at break-neck speed and was failing fast.

A volley rattled behind me.

I urged him again, spurring relentlessly, but the rasping wheeze of his breathing told me he was nearly spent.

A bullet grazed my cheek. I unholstered my revolver and fired blindly into the galloping troop.

Two burly ruffians fell, but the remainder pressed)n drawing nearer with every stride till I could hear the laboured breathing of their steeds. I spurred incessantly but the Khan could give no more.

A shot rang close behind me, I wheeled and fired into the face of the leader. The flash revealed the fright-bleached features of Van Zwyn, as horse and rider sank in a huddled heap.

The storm had ceased. Before me unrolled the vale of the Kamagawa like a brilliant kakemono, each knoll and pine grove gilded with the sun. A turn in the road revealed a streak of silver in the grey-green valley, where a river gashed the plain.

A bamboo bridge spanned it, and beyond, only a quarter of a mile distant, lay Kamagawa and safety.

I reached forward and patted the Khan's neck:

“Only one more spurt, Little Devil,“ I coaxed as I felt the pumping of his heart. But the spring was gone from his haunches. The end was near.

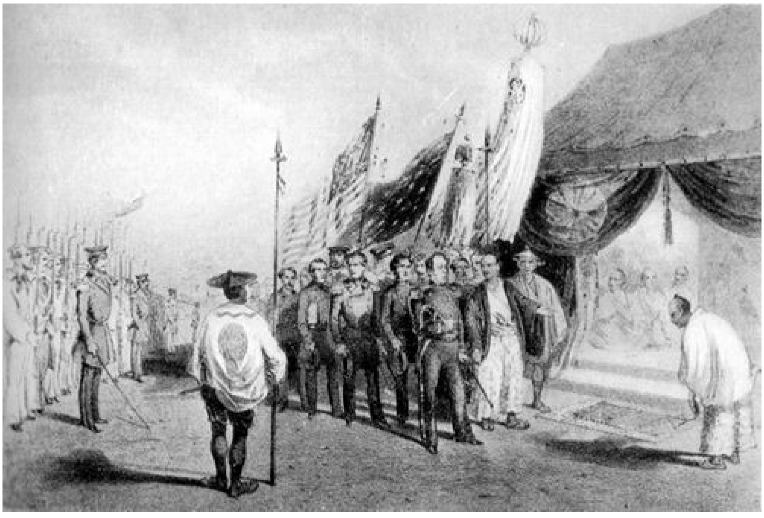
The clatter of hoofs drew nearer and nearer! Another volley rang from my pursuers!

A flare of lightning illumined the road and the storm crashed about me with renewed fury. On I splashed through mire and murk, shouting encouragement to my floundering horse.

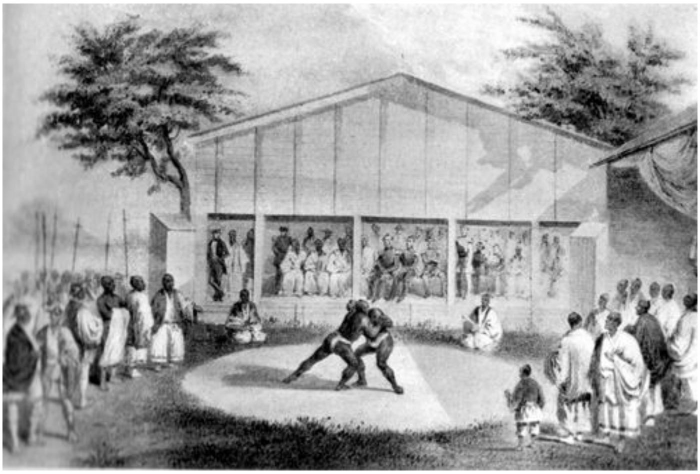
A flood of turbid water swelled the rivulet to a raging torrent.

Suddenly, to my consternation, where should have been the bridge, I saw only a yawning gulf. I bit my lips and cursed.

It was not too great a leap for a fresh mount; but the Khan was done for!

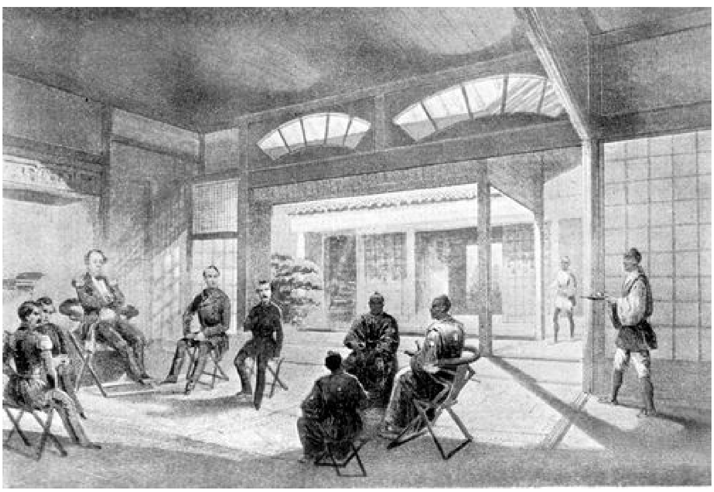


“Banzais rent the air! Strains of patriotic music broke from the ship‘s bands, as we entered the Treaty house“
From *Government Report.* W. Heine



At last, with a supreme effort, Driving Wind lifted his antagonist and pinned him violently to the ground!"
From *U. S. Government Report.* W. Heine

"The ceremonial was a complete triumph"



"Gravely the representatives of the two governments affixed their signatures"
"There shall be a perfect, permanent, and universal peace between the United States, and the Empire of Japan"

I had emptied my revolver. The game was lost!

Suddenly I felt him stiffen under me. I laughed like a madman. He was willing to try the leap!

"Go it, Little Devil!" I cried, gripping the reins and leaning to the take off.

"Hai! Hai!" I yelled giving him the spur.

He left the bank like a shaft of lightning!

I gritted my teeth, expecting to fall into the stream or be dashed in fragments against the further bank. I shut my eyes and prayed. That one moment seemed a lifetime!

The Khan faltered an instant, then rose.

He landed safe! He made the jump, but it broke his heart. He staggered blindly on to the village, his knees collapsed, and he dropped like a stone.

Shouts resounded from my baffled pursuers, who pulled in heir horses at the very brink.

A great darkness fell over me.

The next thing I knew a Jacky from the *Mississippi* was bathing my head with a wet sponge.

VII

RECOMPENSE

The Commodore bent over me in kindly solicitude:

"You have done the impossible, Hazard," he laughed. "You have forged the key to the Open Gate!"

His words heartened me like wine. I recalled my mission, telling him of Van Zwyn's cowardly plot against his life.

"He has found his final recompense," he interposed. "Return with me; your good work shall not pass unnoticed."

Longing for O Setsu San held me inexorably.

"My heart is in Japan," I confided frankly.

"H—m, I see," he smiled. "You shall stay as Secretary of the American Legation."

He wrung my hand as I stammered my gratitude.

The Wrestlers

Upon the beach a troop of bronze-skinned Nios were lumbering about like burly elephants.

About their loins were girded silken sashes emblazoned with the crests of their respective daimios.

Their massive chests and stalwart thighs were bare. Never had I seen men of greater stature nor more prodigious weight.

Their patrons were proudly displaying to the American officers the points of their champions.

As a test of strength the daimios ordered them to carry sacks of rice to the shore. Each sack weighed over a hundred pounds, and each wrestler bore two sacks. One carried a sack by his teeth, and another turned somersaults with his load as easily as if it had been a feather.

While we watched, a gong sounded for the wrestling.

A ring twelve feet in diameter was laid out near the treaty-house, and divans reserved for the Commodore and his suite. The bands blared joyously as with characteristic Oriental ceremony we were conducted to our seats.

On a signal from the herald, Driving Wind and Tajikarao lumber clumsily into the ring. They advance slowly toward each other stamping their feet and clapping their powerful thighs, then stooping to the ground they grasp handfuls of sand which they toss over their monstrous shoulders.

For a while they crouch glaring at one another like wild beasts about to spring.

The umpire hovers about, watching till the combatants draw breath at the same time, then suddenly clicks his fan!

They hurl themselves against each other like tigers ringing on their prey! They grip their brawny arms in desperate tussle. Glistening with sweat their sinews stand out like the knotted muscles of some sculptured Hercules. Their faces grow livid. Their monstrous bodies strain and heave!

Each of forty famous throws they try by turns. The umpire darts here and there scanning each combatant for a sign of victory.

At last, with a supreme effort, Driving Wind lifted his antagonist and pinned him violently to the ground!

A frenzied yell burst from the Japanese. Mad with delight they threw coins, hats, and coats, their own or their neighbours, indiscriminately into the ring!

The victor was conducted to the Commodore that he might admire his brawny limbs.

He grasped the massive arms and ran his hand over the thick, bull-like neck.

Suddenly Driving Wind snatched a knife from his loin-cloth and brandished it in the air!

The Commodore eyed him unflinchingly.

The wrestler wavered an instant then struck!

With a sudden bound I leapt between and caught his wrist. He writhed and squirmed, striving to free his hand from my relentless grip.

Slowly but steadily I bent his wrist backward, then, with a quick wrench, bore his arm, elbow downward, over my shoulder!

It was a well-known trick of jujutsu. The bone snapped; the knife fell from his weakened grasp and clanged upon the floor!

Before he could recover, a band of Jackies rushed upon him, overpowered the dumbfounded champion, and put him in irons.

The Commodore gripped my hand:

"Come with me," he smiled, "and enjoy the fruit of your labours!" and we hastened to the Treaty House.

I spare you the solemn ceremonial. Suffice it to say that it was a complete triumph. Gravely as befitted their sense of responsibility, the representatives of the two governments affixed their signatures. Banzais rent the air! Strains of patriotic music broke from the ships' bands! My eyes dimmed with joyous tears as I read the President's prophetic words:

"There shall be a perfect, permanent, and universal peace, and a sincere and cordial amity between the United States of America and the Empire of Japan!"

Without You

The cherry-blossoms call you. Far and near
They shed their snowy petals in the light
Like flakes of flame! The first frail lotus white
From timid lids like frightened children peer,
In thickets lush the iris lifts its spear
And wings its purple plumes in mimic flight.
The air is rife with rumours of delight
And myriad rustlings murmurous and clear!

And yet 'tis winter still without you here—
Without your love to light the ceaseless gloom.
Spring's wonted flowers for me no longer bloom,
Beneath the leafless bough no birds do sing.
The night is void. The day is bleak and drear
Else thou art nigh, my sunshine and my spring.

Spring was here; my task was completed; the game was won! But my heart was chill with apprehension.

At last I was conscious of the spell that bound me to Japan. Not the zest of adventure or hope of petty reward. The awakening of a sleeping nation to its world-wide life was but a pretext for the great adventure — the quest of O Setsu San!

A heavy hand fell upon my shoulder, and, turning, I looked into the cold, impassive face of Satsuma.

"Hazard Sama," he muttered. "You are hereby summoned to appear instantly before the Emperor!"

I repressed a shudder as I realized that this was but a courteous announcement of arrest. Well I knew the crime for which they would indict me, conspiracy with the Shogun against the ancient laws — the penalty — death!

As I knelt before the Mikado, his face inscrutable as the Daibutsu, hope faded from my heart.

“Reckless Tojin,“ he stormed, “why did you not return to your own country while there was yet time?“

“Because, your Majesty, I wish to make Japan my home.“ I stammered clumsily.

“Are you aware, Hazard Sama, that I heard every word you spake in the council of daimios?“

“Possibly, your Majesty, but by what means passes my comprehension.“

A faint smile fluttered the thin moustache. “Most simple,“ he shrugged. “I was seated with the Shogun behind the screen. That you undertook this task without my Imperial sanction, ignoring me as a powerless puppet, is an affront punishable with death!“

“Death!“ I gasped, falling upon my knees in silent appeal.

Bidding me rise he conducted me to the adjoining chamber.

“Fool,“ he laughed, “behold your fate!“

In the shadow, white and trembling, stood O Setsu San, holding a sealed scroll.

“Read!“ she cried anxiously.

Breaking the seal, I read:

IMPERIAL PALACE, KYOTO,

May 30, 1854.

The will of the Mikado is that the criminal, having embroiled himself in a conspiracy, be exiled to the Island of Perpetual Youth, in life imprisonment with his coconspirator O Setsu no Satsuma.

Komei, Tenn.



Rainbow Bridge at Kameido

Nagoya Castle



"Where the Golden Dolphins frisk their tails on the ridge of the Castle roof"

A sudden smile shot across her face.

"Sprite!" I laughed, kissing her peach-blow cheek and cherry mouth.

She trembled unresisting in my arms.

"You lig some great god," she whispered, "so white and beeg and brave. Yaes, you mos' bes' beautiful Barbarian Debble in all won'!"

"Dearest," I faltered, "the moment you risked your life to give me shelter, I loved you body and soul. Tell me you care for me a little!"

"No," she flashed; "I don' loaf you liddle bit. I loaf you beeg tarrible lot. Say, you gon' marry with me? Stay Japan for aever and aever?"

"Forever," I echoed, clasping her to my heart.

She laughed abandonedly.

“Banzai, Banzai!“ she cried, clapping her hands, “I mos‘ happy female-woman in all Japan—in whole, wide worl‘!“

“The pendent clusters of wistaria droop
Their purple tassels o‘er the tranquil lake‘‘

CHAPTER XII

A MODERN SAMURAI

PRELUDE

THE CHILDREN'S ISLE

Satin sails in a crimson dawn
Over the silky, silver sea.
Purple veils of the dark withdrawn;
Heavens of pearl and porphyry;
Purple and white in the morning light
Over the water the town we knew,
In tiny state, like a willow plate
Shone, and behind it the hills were blue.

There, we remembered, the shadows pass
All day long like dreams in the night,
There in the meadows of dim blue grass
Crimson daisies are ringed with white,
There the roses flutter their petals,
Over the meadows they take their flight,
There the moth that sleepily settles
Turns to a flower in warm soft light.

There when the sunset colours the streets
Everyone buys at wonderful stalls
Toys and chocolates, guns and sweets,
Ivory pistols and Persian shawls;
Everyone's pockets are crammed with gold;
Nobody's heart is torn with care,
Nobody ever grows tired and old,
And nobody calls you baby there.

There with a hat like a round white dish,

Upside down on each pig-tailed head,
Jugglers offer you snakes and fish,
Dreams and dragons and ginger-bread,
Beautiful books with marvellous pictures,—
Painted pirates and streaming gore
And everyone reads without any strictures
Tales he remembers forevermore.

There when the dim blue daylight lingers
Listening, and the West grows holy,
Singers crouch with their long white fingers
Floating over the zithern slowly;
Paper lamps with a peachy bloom
Burn above on the dim blue bough,
While the zitherns gild the gloom
With curious music! I hear it now.

The Flower of Old Japan.
ALFRED NOYES.

OKAMA was making holiday.

His student life was over. An unknown world loomed before him. Just for today he would be a boy.

He strolled through the Kameido rejoicing in the motley amusements of the children's fête. He bought a penny whistle and added his quota to the universal hubbub. He watched jugglers and wrestlers, fed monkeys, and played with the children.

Then, wearying of the crowd, he wandered to the lake.

A maiden stood on the Rainbow Bridge gazing idly at the gold-fish as they darted like flying flames through the darkling water. Pendent, purple tassels of wistaria framed her lithe figure, robed in a kimono of dove-grey crepe.

In the butterfly loops of hen blue-black hair nestled a spray of cherry bloom.

Okama smiled; never had he seen a more enchanting creature. Approaching the maid with quiet courtesy he offered her a handful of mochi (rice cakes).

“Fairest of maids art thou,“ he murmured, “as Kameido is the queen of parks.“

The girl laughed a rill of silver and tossed a mochi to the carp.

“Fairer than ever it seems,“ he sighed,“ now that I am about to leave for many years.“

“You gon‘ ver‘, ver‘ far?“ she asked with ill-concealed solicitude.

“To America,“ he frowned moodily.

“‘Merica!“ she cried. “Way down bottom of worl‘!“

“Why do you persist in looking down?“ he complained.

The maiden gave no answer.

Then, pointing to the water he smiled: “I like it better now.“

“Why?“ she asked naively.

“Because I see you down there in America with me. That is a good omen. I will go.“

“Better liddle snail an crawl noun‘ won‘, as stay for aever mossy tile on house top!“ she babbled, paraphrasing an ancient proverb.

“The snail will crawl till it reaches the goal!“ he said firmly.

“Then liddle snail skip back to Sakura San?“ she queried wistfully.

“Yes, Cherry Blossom,“ he laughed, “I shall come from the bottom of the world.“

“I gon‘ wait,“ she smiled. “I gon‘ wait for you all my million lives, Sayonara, Honourable-Husbandto-be,“ and tossing a mochi to the carp she pattered down the rainbow archway.

Sayonara (Good-bye)

The creaking windlass slacks its rattling chain,
And raucous voices of the swart-skinned crew
Are stilled as shrill the farewell whistle blew,
The broad-beamed scows, which from the distant plain
Brought endless tubs of sake melt in rain;
The engine‘s throb and ever-whirling screw,
Churning to foam the sea‘s unruffled blue
All fill me with a sense of loneliness and pain.
For I am oil to ceaseless toil and strife
In that far land ‘neath the horizon‘s rim,
And may not know again for many years
The glamour of my joyous, child-like life,
And, as the town-lights glimmer, vague and dim,
I am not sure if ‘tis through mist or tears.

I

TOPSY-TURVY LOVE-LETTERS

The Alien

Only a little, smiling Japanese,
Though kingly blood is flowing in my veins.
Dishonoured here, my forebears o‘er the seas,

With their twin swords, washed out dishonour's stains.
Only a little, smiling Japanese.

Only a little, alien Japanese,
No suffrage may I claim, howe'er I choose
To toil and take the starving wage you please.
What have I done, the guerdon meet to lose?
Only a little alien Japanese.

Only "a little, yellow Japanese!"
The scum of Europe throng your fetid streets.
And fester here in filth and dread disease.
My race, though white, scorn and injustice meets,
Only "a little, yellow Japanese!"

Only a little smiling Japanese,
In silence stifling my indignities,
And blithe at heart as are the busy bees;
But in the years that soon will come, mayhap,
You'll change your mind about the little Jap.

SWEET-HEARTED-ESTEEMED Miss:

SAN FRANCISCO, March 15, 1863.

Please excuse honourable English. I write it so your august parents not make spyings at our affections.

Ah! it is not without symbolism that United State is situate on bottom side of earth. All Merican moralities are likewise down-side up.

On the yesterday I behold honourable Samurai at parting of wife subject her to revolting kiss-ceremony! You imagine not such disgustingness.

The participapers place their mouths shamelessly in conjunction, then explode breath noisomely as child's orange-juice-sucking!

Merican female-ladies is most frightsome.

I make boldness to address one in hotel, cigarette-stalk-selling. Her hair is a redness of demons. Her eyes a monstrousness of cow. She masticate ceaseless sweetmeat I have vainsome endeavour for eat. But it is immortal as gods, refusing to perish under tooths or digestum. Her name is Mees Maud.

"Flower names Japanese female prefer." I explain.

"Chambermaid-lady possess pure, spotness name Lily," she but in dispolitely.

This I uncover is most surprise, for Lily is African female of midnightness complexion!

More I see of Merican female-women more I am enamelled of you. Everywhere I go in solitary like off-cast rose. My liver leap with disgust and I make tear-droppings from eye like Pacific Ocean.

My fortunes are at height of lowness, and rain pour through hat I stole from scare-crow.

Hoping that you are the same.

Your faithless, insignificance servant

ITAHASHI OKAMA.

I disclose poem I decompose for you.

Disgust

At the midnighty — all by loneness only God and self,
In beastful slumber snores the universe.
Palpitating on lonesome couch, like ship on ocean,
Besat by boneless winds of black disgust,
With sleepness eye and wild wide-opened soul,
I contemplate the memories of bygone in light of ink
Until, alas, the voice of winds erupt about my dwelling:
God made the midnighty for dream of lonesome love.

Oh! delicious pain of love!
Flit in by bursted window with Lady Moon welcome!
Ever a genteel violet upgaze her damp blue eye.
Ever a reddy rose manicure thorn against window-pane,
Alas! such bright sun-blossoms not for cast-off Jap boy!
I have such of none hope not at all.

Only a withered, black, night-coloured soul![1]

T0KIO, May 30, 1863.

[1]Transcribed from *English as she is Japped,* by Basil Hall Chamberlain.

MOST RESPECTABLE SIR:

How true the proverb that "heart of man changes more swiftness as autumn sky."

How can you be so crule to make forgiddings your love some Cherry Blossom for those big, bad Barbarian-female-women.

I am submerged in sorrowful of your unkindsomeness.

I make studyings in Honourable Children's-Noise-Making-Place; (Kindergarten) and am learn Merican Battle Hymn Star-Spangled Banner and Columbia Jam of the Ocean.

Now is that springtime. Littel birds is songing and flowers is smiling bright perfumery at blue heavens. Pretty soonly I go Kameido-bridge-roaming enjoy delightsome sorrowful thought of you. Ah! dear Okama, moon is shining through shoji. I think of old-fashion-by-gone sing-song:

"The sky is sea
Where cloud waves sway.
The moon is boat
On sky afloat.
To stars so free
It sail away.

"Would I on sea,
Like moon in sky,
Might float like boat
To stars and thy!"

Yours lonesomely
CHERRY BLOSSOM.
SAN FRANCISCO,
January 1, 1864.

HONOURABLE SAKURA SAN,

Delicious Miss:

I have honour to denounce through influenza of Mees Maud I have secure desireful position whereat 1 support self by same time I make night-school-studyings. I am honourable-assistance-barber to Italian samurai Christofo-Colombo-Santa-Maria-Garibaldi!

When in gratesomeness I demean myself to make Merican kiss-ceremony by Mees Maud she say:

“Cut mush stuff, Kid. Crissy C‘lumbo give you buff in slats. He‘s my steady. See?“

Wherefor I make observation moralities of Merican female-lady more great than I imagination.

My most best cuspidor is corpulent daimio I have honour to make shampooing and ice-towels when he outcomes steam-bath in alcoholler status, with brain-ache of great frightfulness.

His name is George Washingtown Steal. When I require: “Can do deeds of Washtown?“ he explode:

“Can do what George Washingtown could never. Can tell lie. By those doings I am become Congreaseman.“

“Will take me to Washtown for study politic ecomics, so I becoming Barbarian diplomat?“ I require with eye-wink.

“Perhapsly,“ he response, his corpulency shaking like Tokio earth-quake.

Hoping you suffer good healthy, and likesome Honourable Ancestors,

I remaining,

Yours respectably,

ITAHASHI OKAMA.

P.D.Q.

I disclose poetical-spasms in praise of sufferingents, because I have brain-storm.

Romance of Old Japan

"O ladies, during idle moments
Inclined to make coyness with giggly expression

Yet when sick-sorrow-time of brain-ache come along

You are very skilful about being an angel."

HASHIMURA-TOGO
(WALLACE IRWIN).

Female-Woman

The coldest ice, the hottest heat
Are Female-Woman's power on earth;
Sinz Eve did Adam's appel eat
And make a pair-a-dice his place of birth.
For where? For why? Can thou tell me?
For what did Nature destine you?
Cement of Nations, Sphinxly mystery!
To bound man's hart with loving social glue!

If thou be move from erth, Good-by!
What dark disgust oerhelm the human flocks!
Then who to populous? Or make reply?
Or diner cook? Or darn the holy sox?
How sweet, how useless, full of mirth!
What boon-thing can exceed on erth?
Man's blessing and his oftenest curse,
His chest-protector and his cross-red-nurse.[1]

TOKIO, May 20, 1864.

[1] Things Japanese by B. H. Chamberlain.

HONOURABLE DEAR MISTER:

I am sorrowful to learn you make shameless Merican female-woman-kees ceremony. If you don hg' your little Sakura San no more, then I marry beeg Hairy Barbarian Russian, Vasiline Villanoff.

Ha! Ha! Ha! laughing inside self he so diriculous, look like great beeg ape.

I sending you by Merican Maru one liddle present hoping will be sprize. Now you wonder what those are?

Somethings I uncover in curious shop: your honourable Samurai Sword! How I pay? Liddle, significant pearl from neck-lacings.

What you thing? Beeg Hairy Villanoff he sneak in shop see me buy that sprize for you. Dirty Russian Spy! He Threatenings to told Honourable Fadder less I make Barbarian kees-ceremony. I not like him told, so I suffer those noisome lip-suckings.

Hoping you eggscuze me so torrible misdoing.

Yours very obedient truly

CHERRY BLOSSOM.

R. S. V. P.

Here is love-song I tie to plum-tree on poem-writings-day, hoping kindsome dragon-fly carry to you.

"When I recall to memory
Those days before we met,
How disgustfull they seem to me
And full of long regret
'Tis though I not had bloomed ere yet
I first met love and thee!"
CHERRY BLOSSOM.

II
THE QUEST OF THE GOLDEN SCALE

Darsuka was a ronin brave
And he loved Eikibo fair,
A geisha, light as a foam-flowered wave,
Demure and debonair.

He wooed the maid with passion bold,
As a reckless ronin can,
But she only laughed, a laugh of gold,
And clicked her painted fan.
"Your vows are vain as the fleeting dew,
Or the fickle butterfly,
That steals a sip from the lotus blue,
Then wings to the summer sky."

"Nay, Sweet," he cried, "to prove my love
I will plunge for the pearls of sea,
Or soar the sky to the stars above
And steal the moon for thee!"

The geisha laughed: "Twill naught avail,
Unless you bring as proof,
A golden scale from the dolphin's tail
On the ridge of the castle roof.

"Then bring the scale and I will know
Your heart both true and brave!
Farewell, my friend, I now must go
To my dance of the foam-flowered wave."

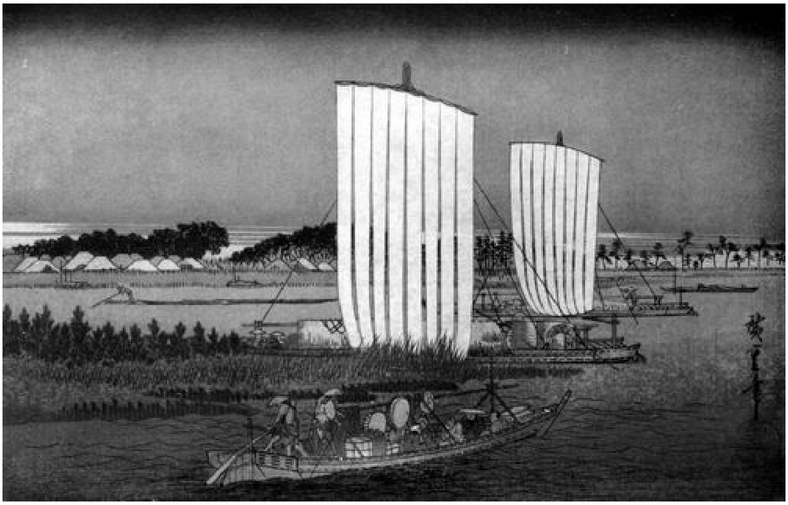
So the ronin bold made a giant kite,
Like a monstrous winged-whale,
And he soared the sky one stormy night
And he sundered the golden scale,
With a single stroke of his dagger bright,
From the golden dolphin's tail!

But he dropped the scale with a sudden scream,
Through a rift in the wrack of night,
The moon shone forth with a silver gleam
And revealed the ronin's kite!

Darsuka, seized by the castle band,
Was condemned by the daimio's word;
And he fearless sheathed, with his own right hand,
In his loins, his naked sword!

The geisha whirled no more, we're told,
Her waltz of the foam-flowered wave;
For they found her, stabbed with a scale of gold,
On the reckless ronin's grave!

"In the offing floats a fleet of fishing junks"



"Their great square sails of open-seamed matting billowing in the breeze"
(Hiroshigi)



Cherry-Blossom and her Koto

A little fishing village hugs the rocky shore, its straw-thatched cottages shouldering each other into the sea. Upon the beach on slender bamboo poles the tattered nets are spread to dry. In the offing floats a fleet of fishing junks, their great square sails of open-seamed matting billowing in the breeze.

From the latticed bulwarks blue-bloused fishers, singing at their task, haul up the dripping nets while the helmsman beats time with a mallet to their mournful drone.

Behind a pine-fringed promontory a bevy of laughing pearl-maidens sport in the bright lagoon.

The light glints from their sun-bronzed bodies as they glide like mermaids through the jade-green waters.

Suddenly the raucous chug-chug of a motor-launch breaks the stillness and they scatter like frightened dolphins pursued by a greedy shark.

“What a chorus for the Rhinegold!“ laughed a big, blond Russian as the startled maidens scampered to covert.

“I camp right here,“ he commanded, beaching the launch; then crashed into the undergrowth in pursuit of Lotus, fairest of the pearl-maidens.

Fleet as a fawn she darted through bog and bracken, doubling on her tracks in frantic effort to reach the sea. But with every step the amorous Viking gained upon his gentle quarry.

Breathless with the chase and faint with exhaustion the trembling girl tripped and fell.

He caught her in his arms and kissed her roughly.

The maid went white and buried her face in her hands; then, wriggling like a serpent, struggled free.

“Listen little Devil,“ laughed the Russian, “I am Master here and you are going to be Mistress of the Master!“

“That all same big Barbarian‘s wife?“ she queried dubiously.

“H‘m, precisely, precisely,“ he nodded.

“You promise faithless drink those three times three sake-cups with me?“

“Many more than that, my little Rhine maiden,“ he protested vehemently.

“What you do for me supposings I marry with you? You gon‘ climb topside Nagoya Castle steal those goldy-dolphin fish, all same Darsuka do for geisha-girl? Yaes?“

“Certainly,“ he promised, “I‘ll climb the sky and steal the moon for you.“

"Yaes, thass what Darsuka say. Then he make his-self honourable-killing, for cause those dance-foam-flower-wave. You so brave fool, love me lig all those?"

Villanoff crushed her in his powerful arms, and kissed her long upon the lips.

"Oh, how those is nize!" she laughed. "I naever 'magine Barbarian kees-ceremony half so sweet!"

III

MORE TOPSY-TURVY LOVE-LETTERS

COLUMBIA ADVERSITY,

NEW YORK, Sept. 21, 1864.

LADY OF SPRING-FRUITS BLOSSOM,

ESTEAMED MADAM:

Those samurai sword I sold for steamer ticket is come. I thankings you from bottom heart; but thing mebby if you not faithfulness I make honourable seppuku, then come back do same to sinful Russian!

What you spose? Most unpossible wonderfully thing is happen. Honourable Congreaseman Steal is send me to Merican Adversity.

Here I educate in Politic Ecomics and Denaturalized Law, and by same time require difficult art of tripe-writer, a musical instruments that makes letter-printings.

I hope, by virtuous of this scarce accomplishments, to require some high financials.

I have misfortunate obsequies in examinations.

Inspectorator say must speak fluidly two dead languages and two living tongues.

I expectorate:

1. Japanese, Living. 2. Chinese, Dead.

3. Dead Chinese. 4. Living Japanese.

But those species-of-fictions not satisfaction. Then I make substitutings:

1. Living Japanese. 2. Dead Chinese.

3. English, Living. 4. Dutch, Dead.

Then Honourable Inspectorator entirely satisfaction.

I have join following Associations:

Society for Preservation of Cruelty to Animals.

Consolidated Jap-American Native Sons.

Young Men's Intemperance Union.

Hoping you are the same

Your humble servant

I. OKAMA.

Enclose please find photographer I have executed for you. Maybe you not reconize for disguise of Derby hat and Merican mustache. How you like?

Please excuse following philosophical spasm, I decompose for Society of Idiotic Transactions:

Immense Awful Mystery of Life

"A littel learning are most dangerously!"
Like sightless beggars groping in the dusk,
One blind-man feels the elefantys tusk:
"Tis like sharp sword!" he glote with glueish glee,
Another feel his side: "A wall!" cry he.
A third his trunk embrace: "A sarpint dread!"
A forth his tale: "All same a rope!" he said,
The last his legs: "'Tis some great-gnarly-tree!"

Thus each a portion feels, nor heeds the whole,
Swareing his fellow lie, like blind-mans we
But feel one symblem those black mystery
Of elefantine bulk men name-sake Life!
Blind-bluffing-blind! in game of infant strife
We make a Buddha minus only—Soul!

SHIMONOSEKI,
December 15, 1868.

DEAR MISTER FOOLISHNESS:

I think you not nize make scoldings at your loving Cherry Blossom.

Hairy Vasiline Villanoff he not nothings to me. He only Honourable Fadder's fren; sold him ole fashion useless guns for fortifications.

Now he gone Pearl-fisherings. That make me ver', ver' happiness, cause for I see him naever more.

What you thing? One ver' dreadful, tarrible thing is happen. Honourable Shogun make rebellion on Heaven-descended Emperor, same time Honourable Fadder make shootings on Merican sail-junks and star-spangled banner!

Pretty soonly dreadsome Tojins come back, beeg, black volcano war-junks bust Shimonoseki thousand million pieces. All beautiful city burn blazes.

I plore you stop those frightsomeness, make those Merican Eagle fold his wings like Peace Dove and lie in lap of Japanese Dragon.

I so happiness you not here, for cause you Hairy Barbarian mustache mebby Honourable Fadder keel you.

Yours frightfully

CHERRY BLOSSOM.

R.S.V.P.

I have join Honourable Ladies Suffering-gents, on account of down-troddy condition Japanese female women.

WASHINGTON,

July, 1869.

FLOWER-BRIDE, THAT MAY SOMETIME BE:

I very much sorry your august Father shoot on Uniteds State ship. Mericans are very indignation.

Now I make hurryings to Washington fix up that Shimonoseki-shootings.

What you spose? Congreaseman Steal take me for be Private Secretary.

Pretty soonly he demand instructions Japanese Politics Ecomics. Wherefore I write honourable speech for him.

But I horrify see he falsify those fact to prejucate gainst Japan.

So I borrow secretly Honourable Steal's frockaway coat-unicorn, make ceremonial-tea in White Palace with august heaven-descended President Useless S. Grant!

I tell him how your Honourable Father is persuade to emboil himself by sinful Russian.

Heaven-descended President make chewings on big cigar long time, then promise remit those $700,000 indemnity. Now your august Father not be ruin in his financials.

I so happiness I make honourable beer-ceremony with scorched dog-biscuit and camel's-hair cheese.

But next morning Congreasman Steal denounce:

"Jap-Boy! Your honourable attentions is no longer desire, you are permit to skedaddle. 23. Fare bye forever!"

I experience by-gone proverb:

"Mouth is front-gate all misfortune."

Hoping you are the same through eight thousand million carnations.

YOUR OKAMA.

P.D.Q.

Through window glows dawn-blush-sunbeam, I make remembrance your pink cheeks and old fashion

Japanese Love Song

Tadzunétsura,
Hana ka toté koso,
Hi wo kurasé
Akinu ni otoni
Akané sasura su.

''Flower One why, fore wedding day

Glows those dawn-blush ere the hour?
Can it be, Sweet, tell me pray,
Thou does love me, Flower?“

IV

“DEBBLE“

The Ferry

Crossing the ferry o‘er Sumida‘s tide
I met one day a lad of gentle mien,
More fair than any youth I e‘er had seen,
Who wooed me tenderly to be his bride.

Wherefore I chided not, nor sought delay,
But yielded to his fond solicitude;
And we were wed upon that very day
And drank the nuptial sake sweet and good.
Since when more dear than life he seems to me,
Now that my brooding doubts have passed away,
My heart is clear as swift Sumida‘s flood.

Like two Miyako birds we never part,
But while with flying wing the fleeting hours,
Content with little wealth, but rich of heart,
Heedless of harm, like ever-blooming flowers.

But more than wealth or treasure is the joy,
Dearer than cherry-bloom, the bliss I know
To dwell forever with my blond-haired boy
Until we reach the shore of silver hair.
Heaven grant we fare together when we go
Across the wonder-ferry, whither-where!

Behind a screen of slender, pale bamboo a cottage rears its mossy roofs. A brooklet, crystal pure, pours its blithe cadence over mossy

stones. Smiling iris like little children peer from dew-drenched lids. Cicadae are singing in the pines. The air quivers with myriad life.

Beyond, far away in the infinite blue, motionless, calm, and mysterious, stainless with eternal snow, shimmers, like a pallid phantom, the dawn-kissed crest of Fujiyama.

One day, in the month of plum-blossoms, came a baby, a big, blue-eyed, flaxen-haired boy.

O Hasu San (Lotus Blossom), joyous as only a Japanese mother can be, laughingly named it "Debbie," from its father's favourite oath.

"You beeg, beautiful Russian how surprize you popper be wen he see you! "What you thing he gon' do?" she demanded savagely.

But the baby only gurgled and rolled its great round eyes.

"You don' know. Then I tol' you. He gon' make that kees-ceremony many, many time till he mos' smother us.

"Then he say: 'Sacramenski! That mos' fine' man-male boy-baby in whole world!"

Catching up her samisen, Lotus crooned a lullaby:

"Nenneko, nenneko,
Nennekoyo!

Oraga akanbowa

Itsudekita?
Sangatsu sakurano
Sakutokini!
Doride okawoga
Sakurairo."

Cradle Song

Sleep, Little One, sleep!
When was my baby made?
In the April month of the cherry bright
Wherefore his face is as pink and white.
A blossom that shall not fade.
Sleep, happily sleep.

Sleep, my Pretty One, sleep
Safe with thy mother nigh,
My love for thee is as strong and deep
As the numberless trees on the mountains steep,
As the countless leaves of the forest high
And the myriad stars of the endless sky.
Sleep, my Little One, sleep!

“Blue eyes,“ she laughed, straining him to her breast.

“Those glory Sun-Goddess Amaterasu send you me from Rainbow Bridge of Hebben.“

The baby opened two wide cerulean eyes. “Sky-blue eyes and goldy ha—are, and such peenk cheeks, all same Ueno cherry bloom! Was ever babe like those?“

“Blub, blub,“ bubbled the baby, kicking in characteristic assertion of sex.

Lotus shook him belligerently and made as if to chasten his spankable plumpness.

“Yaes,“ she laughed, “you lig your fadder! Great beeg Tojin. You most beautiful boy-debble in all world!“

Out of a leaden sky came a sudden flurry of sleet and hail.

The sampans rocked in the offing, like writhing spirits. The shoji creaked and groaned with each passing gust.

The baby slept pig-a-back on the shoulders of its child-mother. She crooned an Izumo folk-song:

> "Snow-flakes! Hail-stones, ever turning!
> In your kitchen, what a row!
> Beans are boiling, soup is burning.
> Baby squalling. Dad returning.
> Isn't that a pretty mix of flurry-worry now?"

Suddenly Lotus started as she caught the sound of a shuffling step.

She ran to the shoji.

The babe uttered a quick, sharp wail.

Staggering through the doorway, his eyes bloodshot with sake, Villanoff lurched in.

O Hasu San inclined herself in piteous appeal.

"You damned Yellow Devil," he muttered, kicking her upon the face. Then, spying the infant:

"Whose brat is that?" he shouted.

"Youse," smiled the mother, wiping her bleeding forehead.

Villanoff broke into a volley of foul imprecations. Then, tearing the baby from her cuffed it into senseless silence.

"So, this is what you do when I leave you! Instead of diving for pearls. A fine pearl this!"

Lotus faced him with dilated nostrils and heaving breast:

"Vasili!" she gasped, "why you looking at me like? What have I make?"

“What!“ he laughed. “You know well enough. Get out or I‘ll kill you!“ he thundered, throwing her to the floor.

“Spare me, for love of liddle Debbie!“ she pleaded clinging to his knees. “Think of those happy days we make Miyako-bird together. I will naever, naever lose my hold. You can not outcast me. I swear ‘fore all those thousand million gods I been true good faithful wife. You have not heart for keel me!“

He struggled to withdraw her clinging arms but, strive ns he might, he could not tear them off.

“Listen,“ she implored, “we go far off Tojin country, live foraever happiness. I promise make forgiddings aevry things, and naever make you angry, only always peace and love.“

Villanoff wrenched himself free and drew his revolver. Then, fearing, if he fired, that he might be convicted of murder, crashed the butt upon her face!

Blood raining from her forehead, O Hasu San fell, breathing a prayer for her husband:

“Namu Amida Butsu!“ she moaned, “he no knowing what he make!‘

V

MOST TOPSY-TURVY LOVE-LETTERS

TOKIO, Jan. 18, 1871.

HEART‘S DEAREST, OKAMA SAN:

How can thank for those wonderfully thing you do for thar Japan.

Alast! how unconvenient is those English languish for repress my love.

No more shall I call you Honourable Sir never, Dictionary say it is "servilious title of thing what have no compensation."

O my dear *dishonourable* Okama, ever you shall have compensations of my love.

I have mos' sorrowfull tail to tell. One day I make wandering round Nagoya castle, see girl with boy-child making tear-droppings.

She tell me ver' ver' sad story. One time was pearl-maiden. Then come beeg foreign Debble-husband bring liddle boy-child. They all, all happiness till suddenly he out-cast her. Now she make wanderings aevrywhere for find him, crazy of love.

She thinks she those Eikibo what dance flower-foam-wave. Say Darsuka come on big kite, steal Goldy Dolphin for her.

I give sweet-meats liddle boy, ask what he name.

Now what you thing? He say: "Debble, Liddle Debble Villanoff!"

Then I look him very searchful. Ah! those blue eye, those goldy hare. Sure is sinful Russian's child!

Then she run away. Naever I find her no more.

When I tell August Fadder, he laugh, say all is lies.

Those Vasiline Villanoff make talking with Honourable Idler. He say Sakura San mus' marry with sinful Russian!

O, my brave Fairy Prince, come quickness, save me from ape-face Barbarian.

Yours in despair

CHERRY BLOSSOM.

K. S. V. P.

I make Moon-Dream sing-song for you. It sound most sweetly to Koto-strumming.

Moon-Dream

Last night I dream, when moon-beams make
Kiss-ceremony to iris-flower,
When amorous frogs make song in mud-pool
And stork-bird stand with bill neath wing-bone.

O Love!
Delicious pain of heart intoxication!
I rejoice with lonesome bliss of joyous sorrow,
With laughing soul!
And voice of disembowelled spirit,
To overhelming disgust of august parent,
Rather than drink sake-cup with sinful Russian
I will commit honourable hara-kiri
Or cut my lovesome locks and be a Nun!

WASHINGTON,

February 30, 1871.

O MY MOST ALWAYS-FRAGRANT CHERRY BLOSSOM:

How distressful to think you have such heart-bursting experience.

Yet I also little happy you comprehensive wickedness of shameless Villanoff.

Never will I suffer him touch so much as your tabi.

“Liddle Snail,“ is coming ver‘ ver‘ fast. Unexpectable event is perspire.

In recognition those trifle ‘demnity-service Mikado make me Commissary to Vienna Exposition. So I is untold happiness for have Bank Savings for sewerage passage; soonly come to Sakura San, make Kameido-Bridge-roaming, hear Japanese hum-bee by silverous stream.

Morever, if you is willing defy Honourable Fadder, we marry and go far Vienna-country together.

When I think this I most crazy of joy.

O, my soon-be-bride, this only hope renumerate all those years of loneless toil.

Will you be change, my Flower? Only one thing naever change through all my million hives—my love for Sakura San!

Foraever Your

OKAMA.

Love-Changelessness

Such wonder-sweetness met my eye
Those day I first see you.
The cherry snow-flakes fell from sky,
Heaven‘s tears from out the blue.

You seemed like flowery fairy sprite
Awing like butterfly

A wild -wood Blossom, ghostly white,
Blown from a blither sky.

Since then, what e'er the time of year,
The Cherry Blossoms sing;
Within my heart forever, Dear,
The world is spring!

VI

THE FOX-BRIDE

Long ages syne, so mossy legends tell,
There dwelt, in flowery-fair Izumo's isle,
A lady-fox of gentle, guileless spell,
Beloved by all good folk for many a mile.

Glad were they if, at eve against the pane,
She softly tapped her silken, snow-white tail,
And swift would ope the door, with gladness fain
To give her of their cheer and welcome hale;
The whiles with graceful gambol she would play
The babes among—then steal back to the vale.
Long ages syne, so mossy legends say.

But wicked hunters spied man fair
One summer evening frisking in the wood,
And straightway, thirsting for her guileless blood
With cruel hounds pursued her to her lair.

Fleetly she fled across the rice-green plain,
Like flame before the wind, seeking to gain
The temple of the fox-god in the deli
And find therein a refuge not in vain.
Long ages syne, so mossy legends tell.

Now Prince Yashima knelt within the fane

Telling his beads, in contemplation bent.
Inari, trembling sore and sorely spent,
Ran to the Prince, and hid beneath his train!

With pity moved, he stroked her snowy nose:
“Fear not,“ he smiled, “I'll shield you from your foes!“
Then straight man shed her great dismay;
When sudden at the door the huntsmen rose!
Long-ages syne, so mossy legends say.

“Hast spied a snow-white fox?“ they questioned him,
Seeking its life to slake their bloody lust,
“Nay!“ swore Yashima, faithful to his trust,
“Naught have I seen within the temple dim.“

The huntsmen turned, about to quit the door,
When swift, beneath the robe Yashima wore
With greedy eyes and mad, triumphant yell,
They spied a trembling tail upon the floor!
Long ages syne, so mossy legends tell.

With wrathful cries demanded they their prey,
Stoutly the Prince refused, a boar at bay!
They rush upon him bent on murder dire,
With sword and pike the lacquered mail strikes fire!

Whereat the Prince laughed low with bitter mirth,
And laid about him with such valiant worth,
That, in the frantic press and red affray,
He felled his caitiff foemen to the earth!
Long ages syne, so mossy legends say.

Then from the shadows fell an eerie rune.
He turned, and to his mazèd eyes, a sprite,
A maiden fairer than the autumn moon,
Stepped from the darkness out into the light.

Yashima told her of the fox snow-white,

Beset by cruel hunters in the deli,
And how he saved it by his valiant might,
And softly she bespake the lovesome knight,
Long ages sync, so mossy legends tell.

With tender words of fond solicitude,
She solaced then his grief with such sweet ruth
He saw the dream was true in very sooth,
Whereat the maid right manfully he wooed.

She, nothing loth, his passion did requite
And they were wed, and after, many a day
In joyance dwelt in fair Izumo bright,
Blessing the gods that brought them such delight.
Long ages syne, so mossy legends say.

Now on a day when sultry was the sky,
A son was born to crown their cup of bliss.
Whereafter wept the Princess grievously,
And when Yashima asked what was amiss,
She took his hand and said: "My husband fair,
Our life has been a dream of long delight;
But now the Ape-god calls me to his lair!
I am none other than the fox snow-white
Whom once you sheltered from the huntsmen fell;
Farewell, my Prince!" Then swiftly took her flight
Long ages syne, so mossy legends tell.

And never more, in fair Izumo's isle,
Was seen the snow-white fox, beloved so well
By all good folk around for many a mile.
But when an ebon fox descends the dell

The trembling peasants whisper in dismay:
"The Ape-god comes to steal our babes away!"
Long ages syne, so mossy legends tell.

"I am none other than the fox, snow-white;



But now the Ape-god calls me to his lair"
(Hokusai)



"Spurring into the midst, with a blow of his sabre Minamoto severed a Cossack's head"

A maiden stood upon the “Rainbow Bridge,“ gazing idly into the lake.

A breeze fluttered her white-fox furs, and drawing the mantle about her shoulders she raised her head.

“I have found you at last, my little Fox Bride,“ cried Okama.

“Yaes,“ she stammered, “I poor hunted fox, hg liddle man. You great beeg hero, hg Prince Yashima. Hide me ‘neath your coat-tail. Protect me from Ape-God Russian. Cause why? I your liddle Foxy Bride, an‘ you gon‘ marry me, take me Vienna-country foraever and aever!“

“Yes,“ he promised, embracing her in true Western fashion, “nothing shall part us now, my Cherry Blossom.“

She laughed roguishly:

“Oh! how that is sweet. Where you learn those embrace? You been make kees-ceremony with blue-eye Merican female-lady!“

“No, never,“ protested Okama. “Look, little Fox-Bride, I have brought you the very pearl with which you ransomed my sword.“

She gave a little joyous cry: “Oh! I so glad, cause ole Ape-Face he say if I objections marry him he tell how I buy the samurai sword. Then Honourable Fadder make tarrable swearings, cause I compromise of you.

“Now I put pearl back on neck-loose, then say: ‘Honourable Fadder, count! Where is those pearl what not was? Where is?‘“

“What right has this scoundrel to frighten you?“ Okama demanded indignantly.

“Not no light,“ she faltered, “jus only one liddle thing. Pretty soon he gon‘ marry me, thaz all!“

He winced as though struck upon the face.

“You are betrothed!“ he gasped.

“Yaes,“ she shuddered. “Honourable Fadder blige me do those tarrable thing. Mebbe you bedder go. Naever can I make talkings with you aever more.“

“Where the devil are you, Cherry Blossom?“ called a gruff voice. “I‘ve been looking for you all over the park.“

“All light. I coming, Honourable Villanoff, I coming,“ she laughed.

“Sayonara, foraever,“ she whispered and pattered down the Rainbow Archway.

VII

EAVESDROPPING

In a fashionable Viennese café, the Tzigane orchestra was playing a last languorous waltz. On the waves of its melody Okama drifted to the shores of his dear Japan.

The music stopped. One by one the guests departed; a waiter was turning out the lights.

“Are you sure we are alone?“ whispered a voice in an adjoining alcove.

Okama pricked his ears.

“Yes, your Excellency,“ replied another.

“Good, let us get down to business,“ growled the first.

“You know as well as I that it‘s the Gibraltar of the Orient. It commands the Yellow Sea and is the key to Manchuria.“

“Exactly,“ assented the other, “fifty miles from Tsushima. Midway between Vladivostok and Pont Arthur, an ice-free port big enough to shelter a world‘s fleet. Masampo is the ideal naval base. But, your Excellency, I fail to see how this concerns me.“

“Have patience. I am coming to the point. Listen, Villanoff. You must go to Masampo and, pretending you are the agent of a Japanese steamship company, little by little purchase from the Koreans all the strategic sites surrounding the harbour.

“I will give you letters to our agents in Fusan who will assist you. Having acquired the sites you will set about building fortifications.

“Buy the Koreans who stand in your way, they are all corrupt.“

“A pretty scheme,“ laughed Villanoff. “But what do I get? What was my reward in that Shimonoseki fizzle?

“I am doing some promising gold-fishing now. Did you notice the little beauty with me at the opera last night? The richest catch in Japan, and I‘ve nearly landed her.

“No, thank you, your humble servant has had enough of unrequited patriotism!“

“How would an admiral‘s commission strike you?“ asked the first speaker, tentatively.

He shook his head.

“A patent of nobility?“

Villanoff shrugged. “Masampo means Korea, Manchuria, China. It is worth the highest price!“

“Alliance with a Princess then?“

“Very well,“ laughed Villanoff. “Make it a royal Princess and I go!“

VIII

THE WAY OF THE GODS

“Who in blazes fired that rocket?“ muttered the captain. “The ship is not in danger.“

“Look, look!“ cried Okama, “there is an answering signal!“

Out of the black fog there shot into the night a bolt of blood-red fire, revealing in its flash a bleak and rugged headland.

“Toshima Island!“ he exclaimed, but the lamp is extinguished.

“Impossible!“ laughed the captain. “There is the beacon on our port quarter. We are off Izu, in deep water.“

Why then are we slowing down?“ asked Okama puzzled.

Suddenly the sputtering of a motor came to his ear, and, through the smother, he saw a launch. A shout rang from the crow‘s nest: “Land ahoy! Land ahoy! dead ahead!“

The fog thickened into a solid wall.

The next instant the steamer crashed against a rock.

The water poured through the broken bulk-heads filling the engine room with hissing steam.

Above the shrieks of panic-stricken passengers called the calm voice of the captain:

“Launch the boats!“

“My daughter!“ wailed Baron Mon. “She is asleep in her state-room!“

“I will bring her,“ cried Okama, leaping into the companion-way.

Half-way down the stairs he met Villanoff bearing a lifeless burden. A scarf steeped in chloroform was bound over the girl‘s face.

To his consternation Okama recognized Cherry Blossom.

He followed to the ‘tween decks. In the trough of the sea wallowed a launch.

Lowering the maiden into the arms of a sailor Villanoff was about to leap when Okama grappled with him.

Locked in each others arms they struggled upon the deck of the sinking ship. With a strength born of desperation, little by little Okama overpowered the giant Russian and flung him to the deck.

“Go,“ he cried, “take your chances with the rest.“

“Leap!“ shouted the pilot, “or you‘ll be carried down with the suction!“

Okama sprang from the doomed vessel as the launch rose on the crest of a comber.

A moment later the steamer keeled over and, stern in air, plunged suddenly into the sea.

A muffled roar rose from the maelstrom as the little craft climbed a cataract of seething foam and bounded toward the shore.

Bereft

How well I recollect the day
Now many years agone,
When as a mousmee, mild and gay,
I left my mother‘s home.

How dearly I remember too
The cottage where was born
The boy-babe whom I cherished so,
So swiftly from me torn.

Without a thought of selfishness
I lived but in my boy.
My every dream, his happiness,
My very life, his joy.

And when he grows to man's estate
Another heart he'll find
To solace him, what e'er his fate,
With loyal love and kind.

Alas, my dreams were all untrue
For, pitiless and blind,
Death took my dear-ling ere he knew
The love of mother-kind.

Since when in childlessness I wait,
Heedless of grief or joy,
Till Death shall come, compassionate,
And take me to my boy.
(After LAFCADIO HEARN.)

Wan and haggard Lotus scanned the billows, as the sea gave up its dead.

From corpse to corpse she ran gazing eagerly into each white face in futile quest of him she loved.

At last the waves cast a gruesome burden at her feet.

Vainly she laboured over the body of the drowned man, tirelessly chafing the bloodless hands, striving to quicken it to consciousness.

Into unheeding ears she poured her passionate appeal, breathed between stiffened lips her own warm breath, and searched staring eyes in vain for some vague sign of life.

Not until the white-haired priest told her that the erring spirit had found Nirvana, did the bereaved woman relinquish hope.

Beneath a flickering taper lay the shrouded form. Blue wreaths of incense fluttered upward in the gloom.

Lifting the pall, O Hasu San peered with tearless eyes upon the cold, relentless face.

Silently she glided to the tokonoma, and drew forth a samurai sword, the sword of her father, the soul of his ancient faith. A golden dolphin wound about the heavy hilt. Upon the Muramasa blade was graven in dim ideographs a half obliterated verse:

The Soul of the Samurai

Still live the samurai who honour breathe,
Who rather than to shame their ancestry
To live dishonoured and dishonour thee,
In their own hearts their naked swords would sheathe."

Lifting the sword to her forehead she prostrated herself in piteous appeal.

"Amaterasu no Mikami," she murmured, "make me not coward in my honourable duty!"

Then, with a sudden thrust, she plunged the blade into her throat.

A slender scarlet thread crimsoned the stainless matting.

The sword fell from her lifeless fingers.

Through the tattered shoji swept a scent of cherry bloom. A white butterfly winged upward on the breath of a sunbeam.

O Hasu San no longer knew, nor pain, nor fear, nor grief. Upon her flower-white face blossomed a smile of child-like innocence. Her lotus-pure soul had fled the mire of earth.

Upon the body of Villanoff was found a packet of papers, incriminating evidence of a double conspiracy: the wrecking of the steamer *Nil,* to conceal his theft of the Golden Dolphin, and his treacherous plot to gain Masampo.

Okama brought a salvage ship to the island and, after patient fishing, succeeded in raising the Golden Dolphin from its watery tomb to its airy home on the ridge of Nagoya Castle, where it kicks its tail in ceaseless transport to this day.

By dint of shrewd diplomacy he procured for his country the very sites at Masampo which Russia had coveted, making Japan possessor of the Gibraltar of the Orient, the key to Manchuria and Korea!

The Fleeting World

Through lazy lane and bustling mart we go,
Gliding in smooth kuruma down the street,
Drawn by a sun-bronzed coolie, brave and fleet,
As round us whirls the motley passing show,
Bulky, black bullocks, lumbering and slow,
Led by brown, buxom maids so smiling sweet,
Plod heavy hoofs beneath the sultry heat,
Bearing great vats of sake to and fro.

From out dim, dingy shops old tradesmen leer
Like lewd nutsukes laughing in the gloom;
While, in the sunshine, romping, plump, and dear,
Nude babies dance beneath the cherry bloom.
O happy folk! who hold of joy the art,
Ye grown-up children, young and blithe of heart.

It is wistaria-time at Kameido, and Okama and Cherry Blossom, honey-mooning, are gliding in rickshaw to the flowery fête.

The years have brought the realization of their dreams. Okama has been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. He has lived to see his countrymen rewarded for their patient efforts by a constitution and national assembly, a “government of the people, for the people, and by the people.“

Once more they stand upon the Rainbow Bridge, long purple tassels of wistaria trailing in the little lake.

Golden carp dart through the darkling shadows, and greedily leap for mochi.

“Fairest of brides art thou,“ murmurs Okama, “even as Kameido is Queen of parks!“

“Mos‘ greatest male-man-Mikado thou,“ smiles Cherry Blossom, “all same Fujiyama Mikado-Mountain“ and tossing their rice-cakes to the carp they patter down the archway.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRIUMPH

The Samurai

Cloud-girt among her mountains
Nippon in wrath, as of old,
Unleashes her young warrior,
Lo, the world's champion behold!

He comes abysmal as chaos,
A boy with the smile of a girl,
Tumbles his man with a hand-shake
And spits him up with a twirl.

Nourished on rice and a dew-drop,
He fans him to sleep with a star,
Believing the fathers of Nippon
Created things as they are.

So up and across the short ocean
He sails to the land of can't
To keep up the name of his fathers
And smash down the things that shan't.

Ah! What a freshet of glory,
When into the noisy fray,
Against a shaggy old giant
Comes this youth asmile and gay!

RICHARD BARRY.

PRELUDE

“IT has come at last!“ smiled Minamoto, his voice trembling with elation. “Tomorrow, little wife, I shall start for the front!“

He had hoped for this moment with the eagerness of a hound straining at the leash.

It was the noblest privilege of a samurai to die for his country.

O Hana San subsided to the mats and bumped her dainty head.

“Wondrous is honour descended down on worthless wife by augustness heaven-born Mikado,“ she smiled courageously. But her voice belied her words; her secret soul was rent with anguish.

“Have courage. I will soon return,“ he said cheerily. Breaking off a spray of cherry-bloom he wreathed it about her brow.

“Arigato,“ she laughed pitifully, drooping her slanted lids.

Suddenly her heart failed her and she sank weeping before the Buddha:

“Namu Amida Butsu,“ she sobbed, “make pity for shameless Hana San!

“Holy, Merciful Shaka, spare my sweet Yoshida! Make august wonder. Stop those crule war!

“Oh, all Gods in sky, Hana San die rather than keep him from honourable duty. But she mus‘ live, for cause of liddle one what is to be.“

Minamoto clasped her tenderly:

“I will stay,“ he faltered, “I will not desert you in your hour of agony.“

Her eyes flashed fire.

“No,“ she shrilled, “you gon‘ go with your reg‘ment. Nobody‘s gon‘ say: ‘Those coward Hana San made you stay!‘“

He no longer recognized in this inexorable goddess his gentle child-like wife.

“I shall go,“ he assented simply.

A smile of triumph lighted her face:

“Ah! those most happy moments all my life!“

“Give me a talisman,“ he pleaded, “to bring me safe again to you.“

“Loog!“ she laughed. “Liddle Iris-Blossom flower, Hana San own self!“

Unclasping a golden iris, she pinned it on his breast. He kissed her hands tenderly; “Sayonara,“ he whispered, and was gone.

I

THE IMPERISHABLE

They stand, though merciless the battle flood
Thunders its mighty avalanche of death,
Waiting the fateful hour with bated breath,
Eager to serve their country with their blood,
To keep undescrate its sacred name;
And plant the banner of the Rising Sun
Above the muzzle of the Russian gun,
Upon the topmost tower fore‘er to flame.
Unconquered still, though unrelenting fate
Their fragile bodies may annihilate,
Ye cannot slay with swords their souls the while,
Nor dim the lustre of their shining smile,

That deathless light which ever gleaming lies
Imperishably bright within their eyes.

Minamoto stood in the trenches amongst his men. He was in the firing line of a great battle. Scarcely three hundred paces separated the rifles of the opposing armies. The ground was furrowed with the scars of countless shells and littered with mangled bodies of the dead. All that day had the Japanese striven desperately to dislodge the Russians from their vantage, but in vain.

The screech of the shells had ceased. There was a lull in the din of battle, broken only by the bullet of an occasional sniper whistling overhead, or slapping into the mud of the parapet.

Minamoto peeped through his loop-hole, his eyes fixed upon a little knoll half way between the two firing lines. Suddenly he caught the glint of a thousand bayonets as a regiment of Russians sprang from their trench, and swarmed like ants upon the plain.

Like a single shot crashed the opening volley from the Japanese rifles, and a hundred burly moujiks fell in their tracks. On came the white tunics in a sanguinary rush led by a great red-bearded Cossack with the shoulders of an ox.

Again the Japanese rifles barked in a simultaneous discharge. Another hundred, reeling, collapsed only a few paces in front of their fallen comrades.

Relentlessly the rifles pour forth their leaden avalanche of death. One by one, with a look of stupefaction upon their blanched faces the mighty moujiks sink lifeless to earth.

The remnant, surging backward, strive to save themselves in flight; but the Japanese redouble their fire, and the Russians melt like snow before the sun. Only a handful now remain. Throwing their arms into the air they rush blindly upon the naked bayonets of their enemies. [1]

[1] A thrilling "Trial by Champions" is described by Lionel James, Military Correspondent of the *Times*, in his *Yellow War*.

Suddenly the firing ceases. Minamoto leaps over the parapet and, brandishing his two-handed sword, races towards his adversary.

Silent and sinister the stalwart Russian salutes him. A great cheer goes up as they cross swords and meet in mortal combat.

Whirling his Muramasa blade, the sword his forbears had wielded in a hundred battles, Minamoto springs upon the giant Russian. For once he has met his match, for the burly Cossack is the best swordsman in Moscow.

Swift fly the blades like flashing flames in a ceaseless clash of thrust, tierce, and parry. For a time they fence carefully, each seeking to undermine the other's guard. Then suddenly, before he is aware how or why, with a quick twist of his agile wrist Minamoto whips the Russian's sword high into the air.

"Banzai! Banzai!" shout the Japs springing from the very ground as Minamoto stands with blade uplifted about to strike.

But he will not take advantage of his weaponless opponent. Bowing gravely he lays his sword aside and faces the Russian empty handed.

For a moment they stand thus eyeing each other warily; then with a sudden spring they come to grips. At first the powerful Russian thrusts his little antagonist hither and thither apparently at will. But, like a serpent, Minamoto writhes from his grasp, and, with a sudden trick of jujutsu, throws his lumbering opponent upon his back.

A great shout goes up from the Japanese soldiery as their commander lifts his prostrate foe.

The Russian salutes his victor.

Minamoto grasps his hand:

“Captain Ivanovitch, you are my prisoner,“ he smiles and extending his cigarette-case: “Have a smoke!“ he said boyishly.

II

INTRIGUE

Amida

Ruthless as death, implacable as hate,
In mouldering cerements of lacquered gold,
Sloe-eyed Amida, queen of æons old,
Daughter of strife and victory elate,
Goddess of War, of blood insatiate,
Whose image grim the ancient Shoguns bold,
Wrapped close within their mailed tunic‘s fold,
To battle bore, a talisman ‘gainst fate.

She stands inscrutable, her slanted eyes
Peering between the wrack of incense fire,
That smoulders slowly upward to the skies,
Like some pale lotus springing from the mire,
Passionless goddess, pure, inviolate,
Aflame with ceaseless fires of ruthless hate.

Ruthless as death, but how surpassing fair, like pale Amida worn with vain desire, her lustrous eyes lit with the fires of hate.

Thus she seemed to Minamoto as he first caught sight of her inscrutable face at Dalny. This Russian goddess, cold, haughty, and relentless — sleek serpent-woman with the sting of death. But like the serpent, obsidian-eyed and slothful, this smiling sorceress exercised over the little Japanese a fascination malign but irresistible.

Tacita was an enigma. Why she lingered in Dalny after the evacuation of the Russians no one knew.

Minamoto stood wonder-struck as he met her at the door:

“Pardon,“ he stammered, “I am assigned quarters here.“

“Soldier, the house is yours,—what the Russian looters have left,“ she smiled sadly. “Come and see.“

Through the vacant mansion she led him to a basement store-room littered with precious heirlooms. “This is all I have in the world,“ she sighed wistfully.

Opening a door she disclosed a hidden passage. “It leads beneath the city wall to the Port Arthur post-road,“ she volunteered. “My husband brought in contraband goods through this entrance. We were wealthy till they crushed him,“ she cried bitterly.

“They sent him to Siberia where he died by inches, my poor Nicolai!‘‘

“And you are Russian?“ Minamoto questioned in bewilderment.

“I a Russian!“ she flashed indignantly. “I am Polish. I detest them. They executed my father, imprisoned my brothers, and exiled me. Tell me you will not turn me from my door.“

“You may stay. You are one of us,“ he smiled trustfully.

He saw but little of Tacita in the busy days that followed. At times she would come to his office to bring him biscuits and conserves, then with a smile would swiftly glide away.

One night Colonel Imazawa, Chief of the Engineers, came to consult some plans.

“Port Arthur cannot be taken by assault,“ he counselled. “Ten years of fortification have made its enceinte of thirty forts impregnable. Our engineers must open the way with mines.“

He bent his head over Minamoto's plans:

"The tunnel must be pierced at this point," he commanded, "the mine laid here."

A slight click, almost imperceptible, was heard at the door. Glancing up, Minamoto saw the knob turn slowly.

Springing from his seat he threw open the door. Tacita stood in the hall confused and blushing holding a tea-tray.

"You were working so late," she faltered. "I thought you needed refreshment."

"It was very thoughtful of you," he said ironically. "Take these plans to the front tomorrow," commanded the Colonel. "Guard them carefully; they are the key to Port Arthur."

Grasping Minamoto's hand warmly he took his leave.

Barcarole

Small fingers on the silken strings;
Sunset and rising moon;
Far hills of lapis, whirr of wings
Of homing birds in June:
And thou wert there, the twilight on thy brow —
O bitter is the biwa's music now!
Beneath the scented tamarinds
On some celestial trail
We drifted with the purple winds
That filled our sampan sail;
The purple winds blow once and not again —
O bitter is the biwa's tender strain!

PAI TA-SHUN (FREDERICK PETERSON).

In the moon-silvered garden some one was playing the biwa.

The music woke infinite longing in the heart of Minamoto, for it recalled halcyon days with Hana San.

An unwonted loneliness beset him and he went out into the scented night.

Beneath the tamarinds sat Tacita, her fingers flitting across the strings in a languorous melody. As her eyes met his a scarlet blossom fell from her hair.

Minamoto strove to grasp the flower, but snatching it from him she thrust it in her breast.

A light flashed from his window. He turned, wondering who had entered his room; but Tacita caught his face and pressed it passionately against her own.

Suddenly she thrust him off, her eyes aflame with loathing.

"You yellow monkey!" she shrilled, "how dare you touch me!" and was gone.

A moment later he saw a shadow upon the pane. It was Tacita clasped in the arms of Ivanovitch.

White with anger Minamoto hurried to his office. The room was empty and the plans were gone!

****

A cloud of dust whirled across the plain. Above the haze white coats could be discerned; then the tossing heads of horses and flying manes as the cloud circled nearer and nearer. The plain thundered with the thud of galloping hoofs.

Suddenly with a cry as of wild beasts a band of Cossacks swooped down upon the gate.

Minamoto with a handful of samurai leaped to the saddle and gave chase. Though twice outnumbered by their stalwart antagonists the intrepid little troopers sabred, slashed, and thrust with the fury of demons. Steel rang against steel like flails upon a threshing floor.

The Cossacks, driven back, circled in every direction, seeking vainly to escape. So furious was the onset that, in spite of their superior numbers, the field was strewn with bloody bodies of the slain. Their horses reared, screamed, bit, and kicked, then bolted in mad confusion.

The little Japanese pressed them closer and closer.

Several of the Cossacks dismounted and strove to flee between the legs of the horses. These were trampled to death by their terrible hoofs or sabred relentlessly from above.

From a neighbouring thicket sounded the nauseous laugh of a hyena.

Thither the Russians galloped, pursued by the avenging samurai.

With a blow of the sabre Minamoto severed a Cossack's head. The corpse fell heavily to earth; the riderless horse galloped on.

A figure sprang from the thicket and leaped to the saddle. Suddenly Minamoto recognized Ivanovitch.

Closing about him in a wedge the Cossacks cast themselves against the Japanese in a desperate charge. Cost what it might they were determined to hew their way through.

Then began a terrible slaughter. Minamoto, flaming like afire, spurred into the midst. In vain he strove to reach his cowardly adversary. The brawny bandits kept him off with their long lances, huddling about Ivanovitch in a ring of steel.

In the blind *mêlée* his horse stumbled on a fallen body and Minamoto fell under the trampling steeds of his men.

The little band drew rein; and down the dim horizon the Cossacks scattered like a cloud of leaves.

III

THE ETERNAL DRAGON

The Russian land forces were securely bottled up within the fortifications, as tightly as their fleet which dared not poke a nose outside the harbour.

It was the beginning of the end of Port Arthur.

The Japanese army was halted before a six-mile line of cliffs stretching across the peninsula, precipices seven hundred feet high crowned by the old Chinese wall, fortified by every appliance of modern gunnery. Only madmen would attempt to scale such a wall.

Twenty-five thousand Japanese dead had been the price of the last assault. They had now resolved to resort to mining.

Across the wide plain they dug zigzag trenches to the foot of Dragon Hill.

They did the work at night, carrying back the earth on stretchers, and covered the trenches with corn-stalks, so that they could not be distinguished from growing maize.

The assault of the fortress, to be preceded by explosion of the mine, was set for the following day.

Minamoto stood before General Nogi in his field headquarters. He reported that all was in readiness. A mere touch of the

General's hand on the electric keyboard would let loose a volcano.

Suddenly the telephone rang.

Mysterious tappings had been heard in the heart of the cliff. The Russians were countermining!

"Take a squad of men," commanded the General; "patrol the galleries and defend the mine!"

Minamoto saluted and was gone.

Listening intently for the slightest sound, Minamoto and his men cautiously explored the tunnel. All was silence save for the drip of water from walls and roof.

At the end of the passage glimmered a strange, unearthly light. Groping slowly forward they discovered that it came from an opening inside of the fortifications.

Suddenly the light is eclipsed and the tramp of feet echoes through the rocky corridor.

"Fix bayonets!" rasps Minamoto, drawing his sword.

Alarmed by the noise the burly moujiks pause. Before they can recover, crash the Japanese rifles and with a wild "Banzai!" Minamoto's men rush blindly forward.

In the bowels of the Dragon they fought a bloody fight.

The front rank of Russians fall like grain beneath the scythe. Over their bodies springs Minamoto, his men following like a pack of hounds. Shouting, lunging, and slashing they fling themselves upon their foes.

The air is black with a thick curtain of smoke. Through the sombre pall flashes unceasingly the fiery avalanche of death.

Above the rattle of rifles and swish of bullets resounds the triumphant war-cry:

“Banzai! Banzai! Nippon!“

The firing ceases. The few remaining Russians save themselves in a frenzied rush to the mouth of the gallery.

Minamoto turns, restrains his men, and goes to the telephone:

“We have driven them out, General, but they will come back. Wait no longer, but set off the mine!“

Scarcely had he quitted the transmitter when a blast of blinding flame rent the tunnel with sudden convulsion — then all was dark!

****

For hours Minamoto lay unconscious. When he came to himself it was night. Around him was the vast plain alive with hostile trenches. Above loomed the shattered fortress, its casemates still bristling with Russian cannon. But over it, fluttering triumphantly from the topmost tower, waved the blood-red banner of the Rising Sun!

All was silent, save for the intermittent boom of distant batteries. From time to time gaunt, silver searchlights gashed the sky with sudden gleams; then quickly melted into dusk.

Straining his eyes he caught sight of vague, shadowy shapes groping in the gloom. They were dragging after them limp bodies to shallow trenches which they barely covered with a few spadefuls of earth.

Minamoto strove to crawl toward them, but so intense was his agony that he fell again into unconsciousness.

With dawn the hell of battle burst anew. Bullets and shells whizzed over him, and he fell motionless, feigning death.

About him lay the dead and wounded, numberless as flies in summer. Anguish-tossed arms writhed vainly in air. Burly backs bent in the last throes of torture and despair.

He thought of his lost comrades, the dear ones waiting for his return, and his heart was faint with the agony of defeat.

Consumed with hunger and parched with thirst he managed to find a water-bottle and a few biscuits in the pockets of a dead comrade and thus he lived.

Toward sunset there was a lull in the din of battle. Calm brooded over the vast and peaceless sea.

Suddenly from the Russian trenches crashed a blazing volley, like lightning out of a clear sky.

They were shooting the wounded in order that their rotting corpses might infect the Japanese trenches.

The sun went down, a murky ball of blood, and the stars peered out mistily over that interminable sea of wounded and dead.

All night he crawled, dragging himself a few feet at a time painfully onward toward his own lines. In the inky gloom, illuminated only by the intermittent hashes of the searchlights, he could not see in which direction he was going. He only knew that it was downward. So down he went.

At dawn he came upon a deserted Russian dug-out, where he found a dying comrade. The man was too far gone to speak but pointed his fingers appealingly to his throat. Minamoto opened

his water-bottle and poured the last remaining drops between the lips of his grateful comrade.

Scarcely had he finished when a bulky figure skulked into the dug-out. Its eyes were shadowed by a great visored cap; but Minamoto recognized the bristly, red beard of Ivanovitch.

An ear-splitting crack from the revolver of the Russian and, through the blinding smoke, the wounded Japanese could be discerned, the top of his head gone, the water-bottle still clenched in his teeth. [1]

[1] Richard Barry, the American War Correspondent, has given a vivid picture of this authentic incident in his *Port Arthur.*

Minamoto felt a quick twinge in his left shoulder. The blood trickled through his khaki coat. A bullet had entered his body near the heart; but, striking the iris-talisman grazed his side with a jagged furrow. Instantly he dropped and lay motionless as death.

Ivanovitch sneaked up to the two Japanese, whom he thought dead, hastily rifled their pockets, and was gone.

Crazed with hunger and thirst, dead with fatigue, faint with suffering, Minamoto lay, for how long he did not know, in the filthy dug-out. It must have been for days, for when he woke one morning worms crawled in his wounds. Tearing off the shirt of his dead comrade he bandaged himself as best he might. Then severing an artery in his own arm, he slaked his thirst and lived.

Resolute to the last the little warrior began again his heroic struggle to gain the Japanese lines. A few yards each night, crawling always downward, he dragged his pitiful way through the bloody shambles. Deafened, starved and paralysed, after a week of untold suffering he tumbled one night into a Japanese trench.

The next day Port Arthur fell. What did death matter? Nippon had triumphed at last!

IV

"THE GREAT, RED DEATH"

Hana San

The soul of the brook was rife with Spring.
Sweet was its song as a dream of love,
As Hana San, like a dove its wing,
Preened her plumage the pool above.

Peering down at her semblance sweet,
She smiled to her sister so young and fair,
With the light of Noon on her flower-like feet,
And the dusk of Night in her dew-drenched hair.

Then a sudden fear bedimmed her eyes,
With the lustrous mist of a midnight star;
And her heart was sad with a vague surmise
As she thought of her lord away at war.

Then she smiled again with a wistful sigh,
Like the wind of eve in the cherry bloom,
And whispered: "Thus, when my Lord is nigh,
Will I smile to thee through the starry gloom."

Then she blushed again at her image shy,
As flowery-bright as the month of May,
And fluttered forth, like a butterfly
On the fragrant breeze of a summer day.

Her soul was white as a lotus bloom.
Her smile was the song of the stars above.

Her heart was light as a wind-blown plume,
Though her eyes were wet with the tears of love. [1]

[1] from Yone Noguchi.

Hana San wept for joy. “Make not honourable tear-droppings,“ pleaded the little nezan peering into the pale face of her mistress.

“Look me in those eye,“ she said savagely. “What those shameless tears on eye-winks? Shall Honourable Husband think you sawry of his return?“

O Hana San smiled courageously. “I sawry! I make weeping! That‘s one bad lie,“ she flashed indignantly.

“I heard you,“ insisted the maid. “You made nose-bubblings when you look in pool, lig this,“ and she gurgled in realistic mimicry.

Iris Blossom tossed her head haughtily:

“Those bubbling not me,“ she denied wrathfully, “liddle silly frog. Saay, you gon‘ tole my Minamoto, I keel you. Speak, what you gon‘ tole him? Speak!“

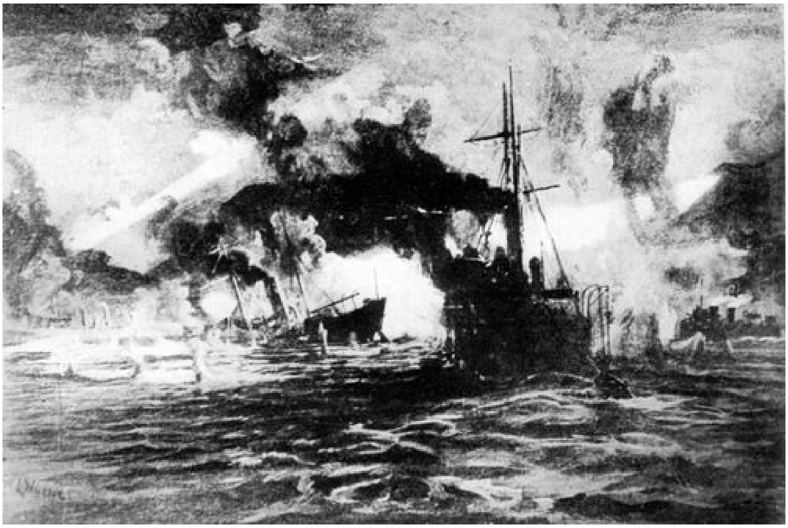
“Nawthing,“ laughed the maid, “I only gon‘ tell him those blub-blub tear-drops just is frogs, only liddle frogs in pool.“

Hana San smiled between her tears.

They gave Minamoto back to her alive, with only a bullet-wound in the breast. They gave him back, but not to keep.



"Make not honourable tear-droppings," pleaded the little nezan, peering into the pale face of her mistress



"My torpedo took her amidships. With a blast of steam the boilers exploded. With a sudden plunge she keeled over and sank in the heaving sea"

Skilled surgery, Hana San's faithful nursing, and rest would soon put him in shape to go again.

The same grim sacrifice must be endured anew.

Was it not enough that her husband had been wounded? Must he give his life for the Mikado? Must he die "the great red death?"

One day the call came. The Russian fleet was slowly creeping along the southern coast of China, seeking to escape to Vladivostok. Minamoto was appointed to a secret mission, the command of the Japanese wireless stations. He was to give warning of the approach of the Russian ships.

A message in Russian cipher had been picked up. A destroyer was placed under his orders; from station to station he cruised, and at last discovered the mysterious operator.

A bleak and barren islet off the southernmost coast of Kyushu.

Battered ceaselessly by wind and wave, uninhabited save by sea-fowl, a jutting cliff thrust its desolate pinnacles into the leaden sky. Upon a beetling crag perched a hovel trembling in the teeth of a driving gale. Through crevices in wall and roof came gusts of hail, while the lulls in the deafening tumult were rife with wailing of wind-swept wires.

Huddling over a smouldering brazier crouched Minamoto and Tacita. All night long had they vainly watched for the coming of the Russian fleet.

Minamoto swept the horizon with his glass, striving to penetrate the murk. The moon rose, and above the shrouding mist he caught a pall of black smoke. He drew in his breath sharply:

"At last," he cried, "they have come!" Snatching the glass, Tacita saw, dimly outlined against the sky, the masts and funnels of the Russian scout division.

"Only three ships!" she sighed dispiritedly. "Look again!" called Minamoto, "the entire fleet is following."

He sprang to the transmitter; short—long, long— short, spluttered out the crackling flame.

Through leagues of space it leaped, twixt sky and sea, till it reached the receiving station on Togo's flagship.

"Which passage will the Russian fleet take?" asked Tacita, striving vainly to disguise her interest.

Minamoto quitted his instrument and eyed her furtively through slanted lids.

"I have just reported to Admiral Togo that the Russians are headed for the Western passage," he lied deliberately. "Remain here. I must join my squadron at Tsushima."

Without waiting a reply he left the hut. Hardly had he crossed the threshold when she sprang to the key-board and flashed a message in Russian cipher:

TO CAPTAIN IVANOVITCH, on hoard flag-ship *Suvaroff:*

Take eastern passage. Japanese fleet lies in wait west of Tsushima!

TACITA.

Suddenly a shadow fell across the table. Tacita turned and met the inscrutable smile of Minamoto.

“Do not think I am unaware of the game you‘re playing,“ he said as he carefully removed the key.

“Ah! You are not so crafty as you think,“ she laughed. “Our fleet will now get through to Vladivostok!

“On the contrary your message has insured our victory. You have drawn the Russian fleet into a trap. It will be annihilated.“

“Yellow devil!“ she shrieked, “give me that key!“

Tacita sprang at Minamoto and strove to wrest it from his hand.

He threw her to the floor.

“Spy!“ he sneered, “now that you have sent my message I have no further need of you.“

“Will you kill me?“ she gasped.

“No, merely deliver you to justice,“ he shrugged.

“I am not a murderer.“

She clasped his knees in piteous appeal.

“Spare me,“ she pleaded, “and I will serve Japan as I have served Russia. In mercy do not deliver me to death!“

Minamoto smiled inexorably.

“It is useless,“ he shrugged. “You have played a desperate game and have lost.—Go! let me never look upon your face again!“

V

YAMATO DAMASHI

Annihilation

Like Athens in her first dread hour of need,
On that eventful day of days long past,
When on the plain at Marathon she massed
Her little phalanx ‘gainst the whelming Mede,
And, by the might of great Miltiades,
Shattered at Salamis their triremes fast
Till naught remained of that armada vast;
So Togo swept the Tartar from the sea!

A greater glory yours than golden Greece,
Whose Spartans met the Medes to their dismay,

For you have sunk beneath Tsushima‘s seas

Fore‘er the Tartar horde upon this day,
As when of yore the war-junks of the Khan
You wrecked upon the reefs of old Japan.

(MINAMOTO'S STORY)

Scarcely had I boarded my destroyer when a shell hurtled overhead, exploding upon impact with the water in a geyser that drenched me to the bone. I gave the order:

"Full speed!" and away we leapt, a great wave over our whaleback.

Through the mist I made out the scouting division of the Russian flotilla headed toward us. As we raced on, their twelve-pound projectiles splashed and ricochetted about us like hail upon a roof.

We crammed in the coal, gradually drew away and rejoined our own division off Tsushima in the early forenoon.

Shortly after midday the main body of the Russian fleet loomed dimly through the mist. As they approached, Admiral Togo ran up the signal: "The fate of the Empire is at stake. Let each man do his utmost," and the entire fleet went into action.

Our battle-ships, the *Mikasa, Shikishima, Fuji, Asahi,* and *Achin* headed southward in a manœuvre, feigning to cross the enemy's bows.

"Now the game is on," I said to myself, hastening to the bridge.

The main squadron, followed by six cruisers, bore steadily down upon the head of the enemy's column. As our flagship crossed their bows she veered abruptly and turned to the east.

Suddenly the *Suvaroff* fired the opening shot and the guns of the entire Russian and Japanese fleets thundered forth.

I glanced sternwards where the white wake of the propeller seethed in the blue.

The first shells shrieked above us.

"Look out!" shouted one of my crew, and at the same instant a shell splintered into a thousand fragments, and the man's head was gone. He tottered a moment, then fell to the deck drenching me with his blood. A comrade sprang to his place and grasped the reeking handle of the Maxim.

We had changed our course and now had a Russian destroyer upon our port side. It was so close that the flames from its belching funnels and quick-firers blinded our eyes.

More projectiles burst about us and a gigantic pillar of water, smoke, and flame surged over us, sweeping men and ammunition before it. The destroyer heeled over, slowly righted herself, and I saw where had been the *Oslyabya* only a wreath of seething foam.

Foul, hissing, and slimy the Russian destroyer closed on us like some obscene sea-dragon. Her ugly crew stood with drawn swords ready to spring. As they jumped, suddenly I put over the helm.

With a sharp jerk we slid by them tearing away rails and grinding to pulp all who had not fallen into the sea.

Then I noticed that the *Suvaroff* in great distress had left the line.

So battered that she had lost all semblance to the flagship which had lately led the fleet, enveloped in smoke and flame, her funnels gone, her masts toppling one after the other, her steering-gear demolished, she was drifting helplessly.

Yet, in even that pitiable condition, with our torpedo flotilla worrying her like a pack of wolves, she did not surrender, but kept on firing her last gun, which still nosed defiantly from its turret.

We were still pouring shot into the almost defenceless flag-ship when someone cried: "The fleet is returning!"

Our main squadron had forced the enemy to the south, and for a time they had been lost in the fog. Headed off by Kamimura they

were drifting about in a circle, while our ships moved on a parallel and larger arc, constantly crashing the sides of our helpless victims.

The *Alexander,* which had now assumed command, badly battered and with a heavy list to port, had taken the lead, still fighting, though her bows were torn open and the water entered the lower port-holes.

A great cruiser followed, a blazing torch from conning-tower to scuppers.

A vision of the Inferno it swept by, her sister ships outlined black and sinister against the western sky.

A blood-red sun peered blearily through the murk. A brisk southerly breeze lashed the surface of the sea. Our main squadron drew off setting rendezvous for the following morning at a point forty miles south of the Ulneung Islands.

As dusk deepened into night notwithstanding the strong wind and choppy sea, vying with each other our torpedo-flotilla stood out, swarming like wasps about the doomed ships.

My destroyer was time first to open fire, hugging the sleek hulk of the *Suvaroff* so closely that she could not depress her guns, to reach us.

Her shells wheeled in fiery arches above our smoke-stacks, bursting harmlessly as they struck the water.

My first torpedo went wide, but the second exploded under her bow, detonating her forward torpedoes, and shattering the entire bow of the great dreadnought.

The havoc was ghastly. Panic seized the seared and bleeding crew. Clouds of black smoke belched from the hull. She listed heavily to port, but her one last gun still flamed defiantly from its turret.

A great, red-bearded Russian stood upon the bridge, drunk with vodka and battle-lust. He ignored my call to "Surrender!" shaking his fist in impotent fury. A fragment of shell had laid open his cheek and his face was black with blood, but even thus I could not fail to recognize Ivanovitch.

He knew me too, letting out a volley of vile invective as I sent my third torpedo. It took her amidships. With a blast of steam the boilers exploded. With a sudden plunge she keeled over and the dauntless flag-ship sank in the heaving sea.

All night long we cruised from one sinking vessel to another rescuing our drowning foes; but found no sign of the dead Ivanovitch.

Morning dawned. The sea was smooth, heaving in great oily swells. A light wind tore the fog-rack into flying scud.

Through the drifting haze I made out a Russian destroyer and hastened after it in hot pursuit.

A sister Japanese destroyer had sighted the quarry, and was steering a course parallel to mine. It was to be a race not only to overtake the Russian but also to outspeed my emulous sister craft.

"Full speed ahead!" I signalled the engine-room. The stokers threw in coal and we leaped forward like a race-horse under the lash.

Gradually we outdistanced our consort, and the field between us and our target diminished till we were within quick-firer range.

Suddenly a forward gun rang out as I signalled:

"Stop, or I'll sink you!"

A great geyser burst before the bows of my quarry but she kept obstinately on.

Another shot rang from our twelve-pounder and a smokestack toppled into the sea.

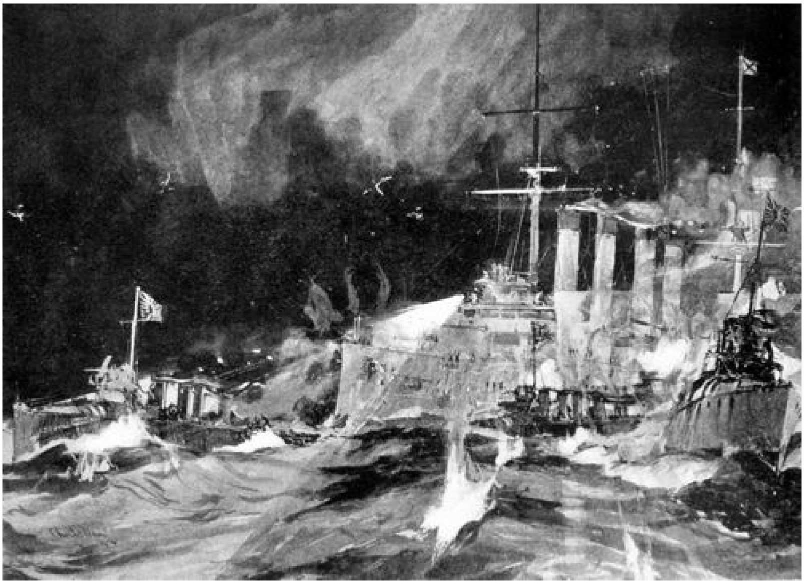
She slackened speed and, as my gunner awaited the order to send her to the bottom, she ran up a white flag.

She was the *Biedvi* with Admiral Roshdestvensky and his staff on board.

On the bridge stood the admiral, nervously clenching the hand-rail; the battle-light no longer gleamed in his lacklustre eyes. He had been grievously wounded, how badly none knew.

"Your Excellency, you are my prisoner," I said respectfully.

A momentary flash of consciousness illumined his pallid face, then he lapsed into sullen lethargy.



"All night we cruised from one sinking vessel to another rescuing their drowning crews"

From a sketch by Lionel James

Admiral Togo



From "The Japanese Nation in Evolution,' by Wm. Elliot Griffis, D. D., .

Lashing together a sling from some hammocks we lowered him carefully to the deck.

“Push off!“ I shouted. “Full speed ahead!“

A rousing “Banzai !“ rang from my little comrades.

By the grace of the Heaven-descended Emperor, and our good gunnery, we had gained the victory! [1]

[1] Admiral Togo, in his official report, ascribed all credit to the “protecting spirits of the Imperial Ancestors.“

“Our torpedo flotilla swarmed like wasps about the doomed ships“

VI

BANZAI NIPPON!

The Musmee

The Musmee has brown-velvet eyes,
Curtained with satin, sleepily;
You wonder if those lids would rise
The newest, strangest sight to see!
Yet, when she chatters, laughs, or plays
Koto, or lute, or samisen—
No jewel gleams with brighter rays
Than flash from those dark lashes then.

The Musmee has a small brown face—
Musk-melon seed its perfect shape—
Arched, jetty eyebrows; nose to grace
The rosy mouth beneath; a nape,
And neck, and chin, and smooth soft cheeks,
Carved out of sun-burned ivory;
With teeth which, when she smiles or speaks,
Pearl merchants might come leagues to see!

The Musmee's hair could teach the night
How to grow dark, the raven's wing
How to seem ebon; grand the sight
When in rich masses towering,
She builds each high black-marble coil,
And binds the gold and scarlet in,
And thrusts, triumphant, through the toil
The Kanzâshi, her jewelled pin.

FROM "JAPONICA" BY SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

Tokyo, mother-city of Japan, beautiful Tokyo, bright with cherry blossom and wistaria, gay with the laughter of two million joyous inhabitants!

Uyeno Park, its shadowy avenues and sequestered shrines teem with throngs of merrymakers, and the fragrant air is rife with the tinkle of samisen from environing tea-houses. A lotus lake dimples the forest vale, like the smile of a Nippon maid, its myriad ripples alive with laughter of the breeze. A million babies crow and bubble in irrepressible joy. A million mothers croon and coo in overweening pride. The first blossoms of spring have burst into full bloom of summer. Tokyo, Mother of Japan, has donned her mantle of glory.

I am lounging on the wistaria-bowered veranda of Minamoto's dainty doll-house.

"He will soon return," smiles O Hana San. He is attending a grand military festival at the Imperial palace.

So I wait and dream through the blue mist of a cigar, while Tokyo decked *en gala* surges through the flowery park in an ecstasy of triumph.

The distant throb of many bands slowly swells to a tumultuous blare and mingled with the roar of a thousand throats thunders forth the national anthem.

Here they come, Nippon's little heroes, gentle boys with the smile of girls, but every one a samurai.

A myriad flags flutter riotously in the air, children wave blossoming sprays, fair musmees serve tea and cakes, running beside the marching columns, civilians shower them with cigarettes, cheering in one continuous roar of jubilation.

The crowd thickens; it pours through the gate, fills the garden, and surges against the cottage, a resistless flood.

As Minamoto mounts the steps their enthusiasm bursts all bounds.

"Banzai! Banzai Nippon!" they roar in joyous pandemonium.

He turns and bows. They catch sight of the "Imperial order of the Rising Sun" gleaming upon his breast.

Again the welkin rings with interminable "Banzais." The house rocks as with an earthquake. Blushing like a schoolboy Minamoto modestly acknowledges their welcome.

Dusk falls, the throng has scattered. O Hana San smilingly serves the tea.

She strums her samisen and sings:

My soul is light as a wind-blown plume.
My song is the song of the stars above.
My heart is bright as a lotus-bloom
Though my eyes are dim with the tears of love.

On the mat squirms a plump little babe in irresistible nude spankableness.

The young mother lifts her drowsy son and nestles him to her heart. She smiles upon her husband in wistful, voiceless love. A tear glistens on her cheek.

O Hana San weeps for joy!

Sayonara Nippon

Very sadly did I leave it, but I gave my heart in pledge
To the pine above the city, to the blossoms by the hedge,
To the cherry and the maple and the plum tree and the peach,
And the babies—Oh, the babies! romping fatly under each.
Eastward ho! Across the water see the black bow drives and swings
From the land of Little Children, where the Babies are the Kings.
RUDYARD KIPLING.

O Hana San strums her samisen and sings,



"My heart is light as a wind-blown plume"

"A mossy roof whose graceful sweeping lines
Repeat the pendant branches of the pines"



“A lonely belfry shrined in shadowy foliage“
Narrative of Expedition to Japan by Commodore M. C. Perry
W. Heine *U. S. Government Report*

CHAPTER XIV

NOTABLE EXAMPLES OF JAPANESE ARCHITECTURE

The Ruined Temple

Time glistening rain-drops lend deep velvet hues
To mossy roofs, whose graceful sweeping lines
Repeat the pendant branches of the pines,
Which stretch in silent shadowed avenues,
Sharp silhouetted 'gainst the sky's deep blues,
Leading to lonely and neglected shrines
Where golden lacquer now but dimly shines,
Whose gods no priest invokes or suppliant sues.

Forgotten gods in their recesses dim
That no one longer either fears or loves,
And yet for homage do not wait in vain,
Nude children dance about the fountains' rim,
Peace broods o'er all the place, and cooing doves
Seek shelter in the temples from the rain.

OF all Japanese arts her architecture, the most comprehensive and significant, has been least understood and still less appreciated.

The majority of Western writers have characterized it as frail, fantastic and monotonous, and have dismissed it with a perfunctory tribute to its ornate decoration. Nor is this strange, since the architecture of the Orient is as far removed from that of the Occident as the diametric poles of their respective civilizations.

Not only must it be judged as the most consummate example of wood construction, but as the supreme artistic embodiment of Buddhism and "The Soul of the East." A conscientious analyst will find in the architecture of Japan one of the most perfect examples of the evolution through twelve centuries of a style that the world has

ever seen, an art not less sincerely inspired than the Mediæval Gothic or the Golden Age of Greece.

"Painted pagodas lift their lofty spires,
And vague vermilion caves, like smouldering fires



With scythe-like sweep into the azure keen"

Romance of Old Japan

Pagoda of Yakushiji

"In place of rigid symmetry it lifts its graceful roofs in a capricious irregularity characteristically Japanese"

Kondo, Horiuji



"Its delicately curved roofs of green-grey tiles and dull vermilion framework remain today unequalled in Japan"

Kondo, Horiuji



"Its delicately curved roofs of green-grey tiles and dull vermilion framework remain today in unequalled in Japan"

"The Golden Pavilion"



"From its gently curving eaves hang corroded bells, that tinkle with the breeze"

Professor Fenollosa, the well known art critic, says:

“It is not enough to approach these delicate children of the spirit with the eye of mere curiosity, or the cold, rigid standard of an alien school. One‘s heart must be large enough to learn to love as the Japanese artist loves, before the veil can be lifted to the full splendour of their hidden beauties.“

Primarily the architecture of Japan owes its individuality to the volcanic nature of the country and the frequent earthquakes. Its temples have been built for over a thousand years upon non-rigid foundations, the wooden columns being set in ball-and-socket joints upon a masonry base. This renders the frames elastic, so that after an earthquake they resume their place with little damage.

The heavy overhanging roofs weigh down the structure and assist in their stability, while the complicated corbellings and dove-tailed frame-work distribute the shock into an infinite number of light vibrations.

In the lofty pagodas is a well (a full one hundred feet high) in which a great beam hangs, suspended from the topmost rafter, which acts as a pendulum, and by its great weight retards the movement during seismic disturbances.

Legend tells that the architect who first conceived this clever device was poisoned by his jealous rival. Those were happy days when artists met with such supreme appreciation!

Horiuji

Painted pagodas lift their lofty spires
O‘er billowy clouds of cryptomeria green,
Thrusting their storied roofs of silvery sheen
And vague vermilion eaves, like smouldering fires,
Faint dying embers of forgotten pyres,
With scythe-like sweep into the azure keen;
By rays of molten gold the magic scene

Illumined dimly as the day expires.

From angle rafters hang corroded bells
Dull emerald bronze, soft-chiming with the breeze.
Before the temple's golden-lacquered cells
Bald-pated bonzes chant on bended knees,
Where sad-eyed Shaka sits in holy gloom
Enthroned upon a giant lotus bloom.

With the introduction of Buddhism in the middle of the sixth century there came from Korea to the court of Prince Shotoku, an army of monks, priests, architect and sculptors who constructed and embellished the famous monastery of Horiuji at Nara, the first notable example of Japanese art.

This group of stately structures represents not alone the birth of national civilization but as a supreme embodiment of Korean and Chinese art still remains the most perfect monument in all Asia, the type from which succeeding Japanese architecture drew its origin.

Entered through a massive, lofty gate, in the midst of a vast court, encircled by the Kwairo or cloister, stand the temple, lecture hall, and pagoda, with minor halls, temples, shrines, and dwellings of the priests. These subordinate buildings have been reconstructed within the last few centuries, but with great fidelity to the original Korean work. An alteration of the sixteenth century, the lower stories of The Kondo and Gojuto mar the proportion of these graceful buildings; but, in spite of this, their delicately curved roofs of green-grey tiles and dull vermilion framework remain today unequalled in Japan in simplicity of construction and subtle purity of line.

Within the temples are the most ancient treasures of Korean and early Japanese sculpture, and the walls of the Kondo display faded mural paintings in which Indian influences are plainly discernible.

YAKUSHIJI

A century later the first native architects built at Yakushiji, near Nara, a pagoda which in subtlety of line and daring of design is perhaps the most unique in Japan. In place of the rigid symmetry of its Korean prototype, this pagoda lifts its graceful roofs in a capricious irregularity characteristically Japanese.

This charming structure marks the beginning of a national style, and exhibits the first example of the double brackets, developed in later periods to such richness and elaboration of detail.

Old Nara

O cuckoo of the ancient city great,
Iso-no-kami; now thy golden lay
Echoes unheard within her empty gate,
Singing the glory of a vanished day!
KOKINSHIU.

Little remains of the ancient populous city of Nara whose hundreds of temples, monasteries, and yashiki once covered an area of thirty square miles. Incessant wars and conflagrations have destroyed all the important buildings of its early civilization, so that we must look elsewhere for examples of the architecture of this period.

After the passing of the early Korean influence during the eighth century there was a temporary decline in Japanese art. Of this period only the small and primitive temples of the Toshodaiji, Todaiji, and Shinyakushiji remain.

With the removal of the court to Kyoto in the ninth century came from China a renaissance of Oriental civilization. The golden age of learning, philosophy, and the fine arts had begun.

UJI

At Uji near Kyoto was constructed during the Fujiwara period a building, the Phoenix Pavilion of the Byo do-in, which in refinement of proportion and purity of style is unsurpassed in all Japan.

The composition consists of a central shrine flanked by two-storied galleries leading to end pavilions. Not the least of its charm is due to its setting in the midst of lofty trees on the marge of a lagoon, which mirrors its fragile balconies in inverted grace.

Lovely as is its exterior the sumptuousness of its splendid interior is beyond description. What it must have been in its day of glory we may only imagine. After eight centuries of neglect and decay it still remains a masterpiece of grace and dignity.

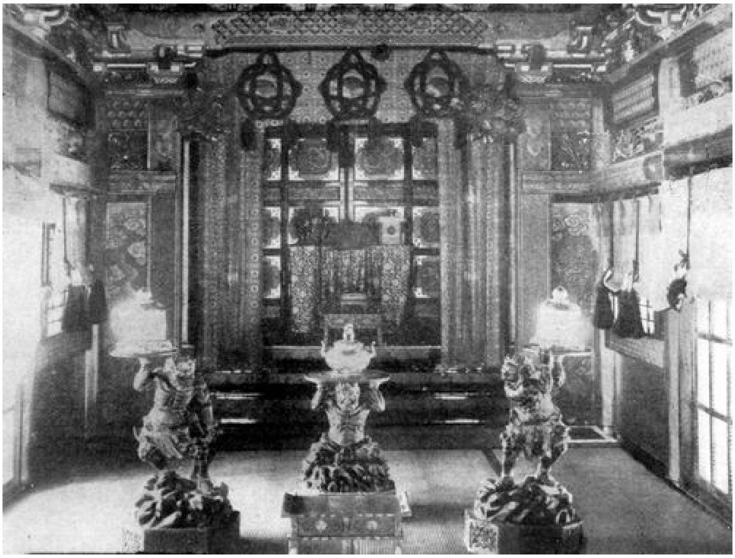
Its carved and coffered ceiling is inlaid with ivory, silver and mother-of-pearl upon a background of black lacquer, and its walls glow with polychromatic paintings and the glory of burnished gold.

Pavilion of the Phoenix, Uji



"On the marge of a lagoon which mirrors its fragile balconies in inverted grace"

"Bronze incense-burners in the likeness of devils



fumed under the shadow of silken banners"
(Nikko)

KYOTO

"Apart from St. Mark's in Venice and the Capella Palatina in Palermo," says Ralph Adams Cram, in his *Impressions Of Japanese Architecture,* "I know of no religious interiors that can vie with such caves of glory as Chion-in."

Fragrant incense, great golden lotus, vast baldachinos of beaten filigree, vestments stiff with embroidery, sonorous brazen gongs, weird chanting of bald bonzes — it seems a vision born of Nights Arabian, gorgeous, unearthly, inconceivable.

Rudyard Kipling paints it with his bold brush in the glowing colours of Solomon's Temple.

“A staircase of cut stone takes you down to the temple of Chion-in, where I arrived on Easter Sunday just before service, and in time to see the procession of the Cherry Blossom. They had a special service at a place called St. Peter‘s at Rome about the same time, but the priests of Buddha excelled the priests of the Pope. Thus it happened. The main front of the temple was three hundred feet long, a hundred feet deep, and sixty feet high. One roof covered it all, and saving for the tiles there was no stone in the structure; nothing but wood three hundred years old, as hard as iron. The pillars that upheld the roof were three feet, four feet, and five feet in diameter, and guiltless of any paint. They showed the natural grain of the wood till they were lost in the rich brown darkness overhead. The cross-beams were of grained wood of great richness; cedar-wood and camphor-wood and the hearts of gigantic pine had been put under requisition for the great work. One carpenter—they call him only a carpenter—had designed the whole, and his name is remembered to this day. A half of the temple was railed off for the congregation by a two-foot railing, over which silks of ancient device had been thrown. Within the railing were all the religious fittings, but these I cannot describe. All I remember was row upon row of little lacquered stands each holding a rolled volume of sacred writings; an altar as tall as a cathedral organ where gold strove with colour, colour with lacquer, and lacquer with inlay, and candles such as Holy Mother Church uses only on her greatest days, shed a yellow light that softened all. Bronze incense-burners in the likeness of dragons and devils fumed under the shadow of silken banners, behind which, wood tracery, as delicate as frost on a window-pane, climbed to the ridge-pole. Only there was no visible roof to this temple. The light faded away under the monstrous beams, and we might have been in a cave a hundred fathoms below the earth but for the sunshine and blue sky at the portals, where the little children squabbled and shouted.“

KYOMIDZU-DERA

Overhanging a deep ravine, blazing with autumn maples and swept by a rushing torrent, upon a bulwark of giant piles, looms the ancient temple of Kyomidzu.

Around it runs a portico of massive wooden pillars supporting a scythe-curved roof of velvet thatch. Beneath this purple pall hangs a buttressed balcony commanding an exquisite view of town and plain.

From this balcony jealous husbands of long syne were wont to hurl their wives, in the naïve belief that if innocent they would survive the hundred-foot fall to the rocks below.

Here throughout the year the faithful throng to worship Kwannon and enjoy the eternal pageant of earth and sky.

The Silver Pavilion



“In a sequestered grove of pines, maples, and cryptomeria, stands the time-stained Ginkaku-ji“

Nikko



"The Yomei-mon, gorgeous with polychromatic carving, commanding the entry to the third terrace"

KAMAKURA PERIOD

Upon the overthrowing of the Fujiwara Shoguns, at the end of the fourteenth century, the Ashikaga founded a new dynasty, built the city of Kamakura, and inaugurated a new epoch of civilization.

After two centuries of internecine strife the arts of peace had languished, but with the coming of the Ashikaga a recrudescence of Chinese culture swept over the land. Representing this period are two types of structure, the pseudo-Chinese temples of the Zen sect, and the Imperial pleasure pavilions of the Kinkaku-ji and Ginkaku-ji near Kyoto. Of the former, the vast seventeenth century monastery of Obaku-san is an imposing monument of the classical Chinese type. In these buildings the long, low eaves of the Korean type are supplanted by steep and lofty roofs supported by intricate bracketings. The temple, almost square in plan, is set on a stone terrace and consists of a central nave rising into the roof, surrounded

by aisles, on one side of which are grouped chapels, shrines, and altars.

PLEASURE PAVILIONS

A fifteen-minute walk north-west from Kyoto, shrined within an adorable little garden, stands the Kinkaku-ji, or Golden Pavilion, built in the twelfth century by the Ashikaga Shogun Yoshimitzu. Here the great statesman retired after a laborious career, to meditate at his ease, the revered master of a coterie of poets, painters, and men of learning. The graceful little edifice rises from the surface of a lily-dotted lakelet, which reflects its golden balconies, from whose gently curving eaves hang corroded bells, that tinkle with the breeze.

GINKAKU-JI

An hour's walk north-east of Kyoto, in a sequestered grove of pines, maples, and cryptomeria is the time-stained Ginkaku-ji, or Silver Pavilion.

It was built toward the end of the thirteenth century, by the Shogun Yoshimasa, as a companion piece to the Golden Pavilion, Kinkaku-ji. Within its gorgeous galleries dwelt a throng of bonzes, poetasters, and libertines, who led a life of unbridled sensuality.

Yoshimasa died in 1490 and the dainty Silver structure was converted into a temple.

TOKUGAWA PERIOD

The end of the sixteenth century brought the downfall of the Ashikaga. After the revolt of the barons under Hideyoshi, Ieyasu founded the Tokugawa dynasty, removed the capital to Yedo, and closed Japan from the outer world.

Under the shogunate of Ieyasu was established a feudal system more complete than that of Europe during the Middle Ages, and the succeeding century marks the highest tide of Japanese civilization.

Buddhism fell into disrepute, and with the revival of Shinto, natural wood gave place to polychromatic carving and burnished lacquer, and "Japanese architecture burst from its brown chrysalis, a flaunting butterfly painted with the hues of dreams."

The Sacred Forest
(Nikko)

The multi-columned cryptomerias loom
In serried ranks, like vast cathedral choirs,
Through endless vistas, lifting lofty spires
O'er billowy clouds of burgeoned cherry bloom,
Whose shedded petals waft a faint perfume
Mingled with incense of the sacred fires
From Shinto shrines, where Tokugawa sires
Lie in the sleep of time's eternal tomb.

Through towering portals, lichen-grown and grey,
The pilgrims file in never-ending line,
Cicada-like a drowsy chant they croon,
And at the temple-torii kneel and pray,
While pendant palms in silver radiance shine
Beneath the benediction of the moon.

NIKKO

"A rose-red city half as old as Time."

An avenue of giant cryptomerias twenty odd miles long leads to Nikko—an avenue of cypress-like trees with coppery-grey trunks and foliage of dull green, aligned so closely that their interlacing roots form a continuous wall along the interminable road, beneath banks abloom with azaleas and violets.

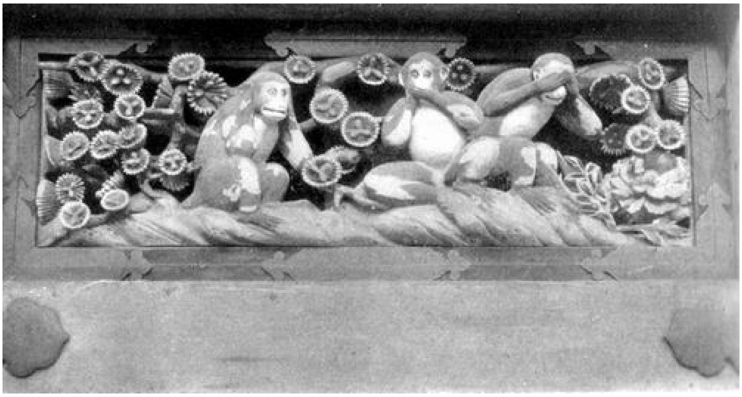
"Vistas of pillared shade," broken only by an occasional opening where a village thrusts its thick-thatched roofs the silver trunks between.

Nikko



"Beneath a far-flung cryptomeria stands the Stable of the Sacred Horse"

The Three Monkeys. (Nikko)



"Evil, one must never mention,
Never see, nor ever hear"

"Never use the word magnificent until you have seen Nikko," says a Japanese proverb. And well might one heed this admonition, for perhaps in all the world there is not a more magnificent mingling of Architecture and Nature, than this noble mausoleum of the Tokugawa Shoguns.

Beneath the arching vaults of the sacred forest, in the solemn spell of its ceaseless silence, unbroken even by the song of birds, we feel ourselves in an abode aloof from strife, where dwell only Beauty and eternal Peace.

Tradition tells that a Shinto temple stood within the sacred grove in days long gone, that the beloved saint Kobo-Daishi established there a Buddhist temple in the early part of the ninth century. But it was not until the seventeenth century, when the body of the great Shogun Ieyasu was brought thither for interment, that Nikko assumed its full importance.

Across the tearing torrent of the Daiya-gawa arches a blood-red bridge, upon the very spot where Shodo-Shonin, the holy priest, first crossed the river. From that time only the Mikado, Shogun, and pilgrims are permitted to tread the Sacred Bridge which gleams like a great ruby against the emerald forest.

At the extremity of an avenue of towering cryptomeria stands a massive granite torii, flanked on the left by a lofty pagoda and on the right by the Sambut-so-do shrine. A broad flight of flag-stones leads to a gate guarded by giant Nios, whose menacing mien seems rather to threaten than to invite the faithful to enter this ornate portal sculptured with fabulous imagery. Within is a spacious courtyard cinctured by a vermilion wall. Beneath a far-flung cryptomeria stands the Stable of the Sacred Horse; under whose picturesque asymmetrical eaves are carven in open-work, with the audacity of Gothic grotesques, three little apes. One of the monkeys holds his hands to his mouth, another is stopping his ears, and the third blinding his eyes.

And the carver's plain intention
One may read, engraven clear:

"Evil, one must never mention,
Never see, nor ever hear!"

At the foot of the fore-court is a cistern of holy water. The font is hollowed from a great granite monolith and covered by a resplendent ebony and brass baldachin, supported by twelve ivory-white shafts.

Beyond the font is the Kyozo (Library of the Sacred Books), a graceful structure with delicately curving copper roofs. From its intricate brackets hang brass wind-bells, and the eaves are embellished with a wealth of multicoloured sculptures.

Twenty granite steps lead to a second terrace shadowed by great-girthed cryptomeria bordered by a lichen-encrusted balustrade. Upon the right, beneath a brazen baldachin, hangs the great bell, which remains stationary and is rung by hurling against it a massive wooden ram. At the left stand a delicate bronze candelabrum and a revolving lantern of curiously incongruous design, presented to the shrine by Dutch traders early in the seventeenth century.

Beyond looms the Yakush-do, gorgeous with black and gold and polychromatic carving, the shrine of the patron saint of Ieyasu, a masterpiece of surpassing richness; and at the end stands a gate, the Yomei-mon commanding the entry to the third terrace.

Kipling says in his delightful *Letters of Marque:*

"Men say that never man has given complete drawings, details, or descriptions of the Temples of Nikko. Only a German would try, and he would fail in spirit. Only a Frenchman could succeed in spirit but he would be inaccurate. I have a recollection of passing through a door with cloisonné hinges, with a golden lintel and red lacquer jambs, with panels of tortoise-shell lacquer and clamps of bronze tracery. It opened into a half-lighted hall on whose blue ceiling a hundred golden dragons romped and spat fire…

"That money, lakhs and lakhs of money, had been lavished on the wonder impressed me but little. I wished to know who were the men that, when the cryptomerias were saplings, had spent their lives on a niche or corner of the temple, and dying passed on the duty of adornment to their sons. This question I asked my guide who plunged me into a tangle of Daimios and Shoguns [1]

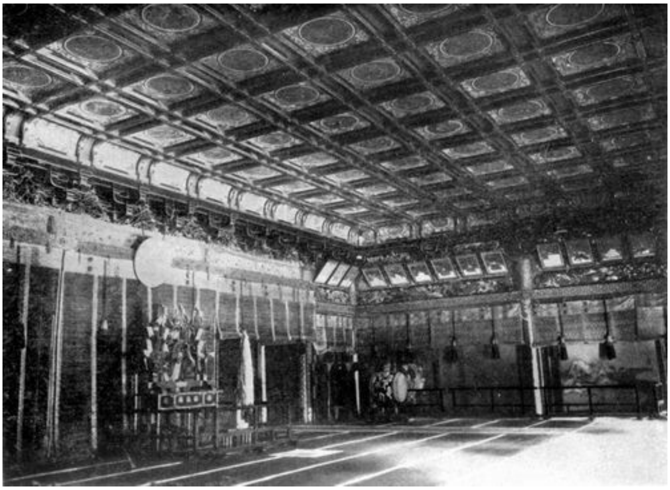
[1] Osomi and Tategawa were the architects of Nikko.

"After a while the builder's idea entered into my soul.

"He had said: 'Let us build blood-red chapels in a Cathedral.' So they planted the Cathedral three hundred years ago,. knowing that tree-boles would make the pillars and the sky the roof."



"A holy water font covered by an ebony and brass baldachin supported by ivory-white shafts"
(Nikko)



"A half-lighted hall on whose blue ceiling a hundred golden dragons romped and spat fire"

La Farge admirably expressed its strange, sad charm in his scholarly *Artist's Letters from Japan:*

"With the fatigue and repetition of the innumerable beauties of gold and colour, carving and bronze, the sense of an exquisite art brings an indefinable sadness, a feeling of humility, and the nothingness of man. It is as if they said:

'We are the limit of human endeavour. Beyond us begins the other world, and we, indeed, shall surely pass away, but thou remainest, O Eternal Beauty."

TOMB OF IEYASU

Passing the Hall of Perfumes, still redolent of incense, we pause a moment before the Hall of the Sacred Dances, where beneath the dim interior moves a ghostly shadow: —a Shinto Priestess in white robes is treading the mystic measures of her immemorial dance. Within the tile-roofed cloister looms a white and gold gate. Over its door, in a bower of peonies, sleeps a sculptured cat, the masterly carving of the renowned left-handed sculptor Jingoro (Hidari).



“Before the solemn monument stand the Buddhist symbols: The lotus, the lion, and the stork, emblematical of purity, power, and long life“

Nikko



"Shinto priests and a gold and ivory gate-way"

Beyond the golden-white gate, soft carpeted wit Ii velvet moss, rise the stone steps that lead to the tomb of Ieyasu.

Enclosed by a granite balustrade, within a sun-lit clearing, engroved by lofty cryptomeria, stands the solemn monument. A great bronze-gate of superb craftsmanship guards the entrance of the sacred shrine. Before the tomb stand the Buddhist symbols: the lotus, the lion, and the stork, emblematical of purity, power, and long life.

The simple but costly tomb is placed upon a pedestal of five polygonal plinths and is wrought of golden bronze in the form of an Indian shrine. A domed cylindrical shaft crowned by a curved projecting roof rises to a finial of forked flame. The Tokugawa crest adorns the door behind whose corroded panels repose the ashes of the famous Shogun, the man who barred from Japan with

relentless fury “the Three Devils—Gunpowder, Christianity, and the Portuguese.“

O shade of the immortal Ieyasu, the one-time hated “foreign devil“ now sates his profane curiosity, a welcome tourist at thy tomb!

But the simple majesty of his resting place may not be described. It resides perhaps in its perfect harmony between Nature and Art. The symbol of the nothingness of man, the vanities of earthly ambition, and the eternal peace of Nirvana.

Tomb of Ieyasu, Nikko

The ceaseless click of clogs echoes from the distant temple. The wind soughs through the pines like the rush of many waters. Above, a flock of rooks suddenly shrouds the sky, then wings away with eerie, raucous laughter. A clumsy caterpillar drags its viscous shape across the stones. Who knows, perchance it is the mighty Shogun in a new embodiment!

DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

Simplicity and repose are the key-notes of the Japanese interior. From a workman‘s cottage to the palace of the Mikado the principle is the same. All but the essential is ruthlessly eliminated.

There are no displays of useless furniture and bric-a-brac. My lady‘s living-room at home contains more incongruous superfluities than one would find in all the combined salons of Japan. Only the necessary, and that disposed with the utmost refinement and loving craftsmanship.

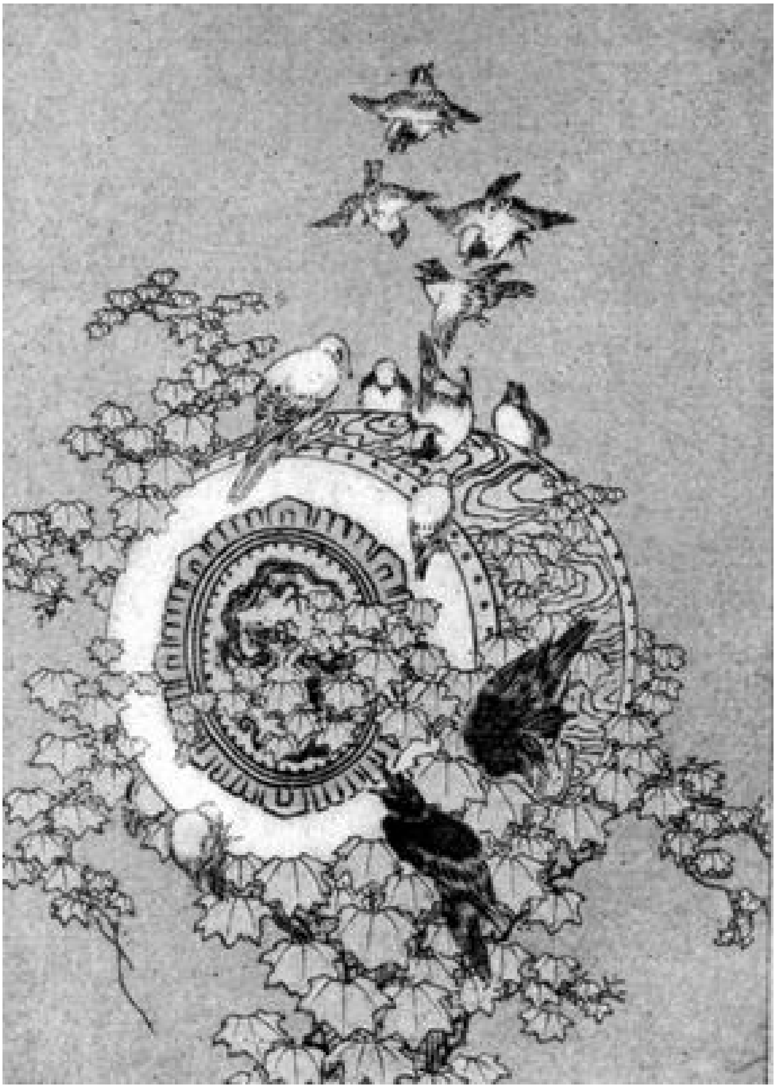
The tokonoma, a niche of honour, is reserved for some choice object, a vase containing a simple spray of flowers, an image, and a kakemono. These objects are replaced from time to time by others taken from the go-down or fire-proof store-house.

Everywhere is exquisite cleanliness. The spotless mats upon the floor serve in place of chairs, beds, and tables. Food is served on trays about the hibachi (a pot of glowing charcoal sunk in the centre of the floor) Futons, wadded quilts, and a wooden pillow, designed to preserve the elaborate feminine coiffure, form the furniture of the night.

Truly the essence of economy, our Oriental cousins have surely solved the problem of the high cost of living and reduced to the ultimate the elements of the simple life.



“A blood-red chapel in a forest-cathedral“



(Hokusai)

As one looks into these diminutive dwellings, the entire house scarcely larger than an American drawing-room, and finds a family of four living daintily and discreetly within so small a space, one sees that in Japan poverty is not the necessary synonym for filth, licentiousness, and crime.

THE JAPANESE GARDEN

Make me a stave of song, the Master said,
On yonder cherry-bough, whose white and red
Hangs in the sunset over those green seas.
The young knight looked upon his untried blade,
Then shrugged his wings of gold and blue brocade:
How should a warrior play with thoughts like these?

Fresh from the battle, in that self-same hour,
A mail-clad warrior watched each delicate flower
Close in that cloud of beauty against the West,
Drinking the last deep light, he watched it long.
He raised his face as if to pray. *The strong,*
The Master whispered, *are the tenderest.*

ALFRED NOYES.

The garden is above all things a picture, or more truly a symbol. It may be made up of nothing at all, only a little sand, a few stones, arranged according to a conventional ideal.

If not, as expressed by our omniscient guide, Tanaka, it is not a *garden*, it is "an agglomeration."

The picture contains invariably foreground, middle-distance and distance; but the scale is frequently diminished to miniature dimensions. The symbol varies. Quaint suggestions of abstract ideas, that to the Western mind seem almost humorous, are favourite embodiments. Peace, Chastity, Connubial Happiness, Sweet Solitude, or Calm Old Age. At the bottom of it all is the naïve search for simplicity, naturalness, and repose.

The charm of Japan is as subtle and elusive as that of a perfect woman. “Age cannot wither, custom stale her infinite variety.“ It is an indefinable something at once simple yet exquisite; the infinite sweetness of smiling Nature and the refined grace and supreme distinction of Art. “Art here seems to be a common possession, has not been apparently separated from the masses, from the original feeling of mankind.“

After even a short sojourn in this joyous island where even the humblest peasant wears a tranquil smile, it is indeed difficult to understand the view-point of our western world where “life resembles a race in which the runners press forward to an illusory goal, only to fall breathless and exhausted before they reach it.“

“How regretfully does one recall the charming manners of the most highly civilized people on earth, if by civilization we mean not the greater sum of knowledge which makes a man his neighbour‘s superior to the extent of being able to destroy or subdue him, but the most exquisite forms of politeness and courtesy, the most sincere interchange of service and goodwill.“ [1]

[1] Gaston Migeon, Conservator of the Louvre Museum.

Let us only hope that this artistic nation, so happy in its innocence, embarked upon the sea of enlightenment, will not wreck its naïve simplicity upon the rocks of Western commercialism.

This for Japan is “The White Peril.“

The Isles of Innocence

There lies a country eastward of Cathay,
A far-flung archipelago of mountains hoar,
Looming dim snow-capped cones and pine-clad shore;
Through amethystine mists of drifting spray
Where laughing children ever dance and play,
And joyance bloometh ever on the earth
And sorrow is not, neither strife nor dearth,

But peace abideth ever night and day.

Upon these happy isles one still may meet
The grace and chivalry of nobler days,
When men were ever bold, yet ever kind,
And maids demure, obedient, and sweet,
Content to worship, minister, and praise.
Where innocence is bliss, let love be blind!

THE END